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A CENTURY OF
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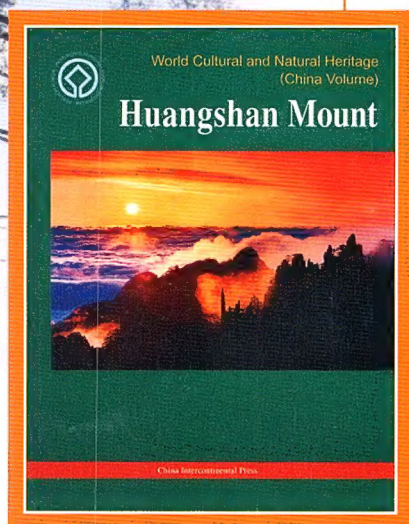
Mt. Huangshan, situated in the south of Anhui

Province, is one of the most famous scenic areas in China. Being put into the World Heritage List, it is also granted with two laurels of cultural heritage and natural heritage by the UNESCO's World Heritage Commission.

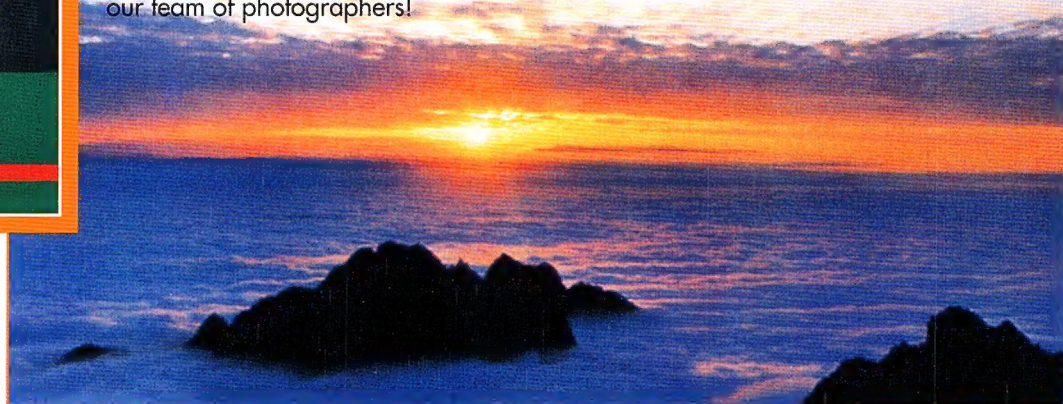
The landscape of the mountain is a typical granite hoodoo landform shaped during the long geological periods by several tectonic movements in the crust. Mt. Huangshan has long been famous for its strange-looking pine trees, grotesque rocks, sea of clouds and hot springs.

All over one thousand metres above sea level, there are 77 peaks in the scenic area of almost two hundred square kilometres. Granite rock forests and rock columns together with massive rocks scatter everywhere. Moreover, Mt. Huangshan is a diverse ecosystem with a treasure of wildlife. There are approximately 1450 species of plants, 300 species of vertebrates and 170 species of birds.

Combined unique scenery and magnificent sea of clouds, the beauty of Mt. Huangshan has continued to fascinate endless visitors. Catch a glimpse of its glory in this "Huangshan Mount" pictorial that is filled with breath-taking images taken by our team of photographers!



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CHINA TOURISM



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Adventure in the Wild West

Photos & Article by Zheng Ligang, Zhang Shachong, Man Man Kuen, Hu Hailong, etc.

Explore the unexplored! China's vast remote western regions are the perfect playgrounds for the adventurous souls. Searching for thrills of the lifetime? Look no further! Find out how these travellers biked to the Himalayas Mountain Range, explored the hazardous caves in Guangxi, rafted the Class V rapids in Yunnan, and braved the pilgrimage trip to the Meili Snow Mountains of Tibet.

68 City Snap

Wenzhou: Every Man is a Businessman

Photos & Article by Xie Guanghui

This is a city where being a hawker is better than being employed. The life goal for most Wenzhou people is to spread their business to the rest of the country, or better yet, to the rest of the world.

China

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Diaolous: A Century of Turbulent Change

Photos & Article by Yu Peilian

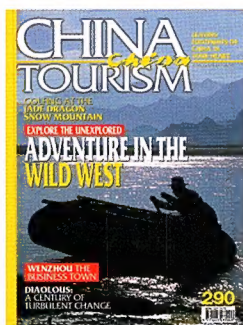
What distinguishes Kaiping from other small rural towns is the series of classical European-style buildings amidst the traditional huts. These 1,800 well-preserved "diaolous", or fortified watchtowers, form a rich and intriguing history of the overseas Chinese.

80 Bed & Board

Golfing at the Jade Dragon Snow Mountain

Photos & Article by Li Zhixiang

The snow-capped Jade Dragon Snow Mountain draws in many tourists with its elegant and unique natural scenes. But have you ever thought of playing golf on the vast grassland that lies right at its foot?

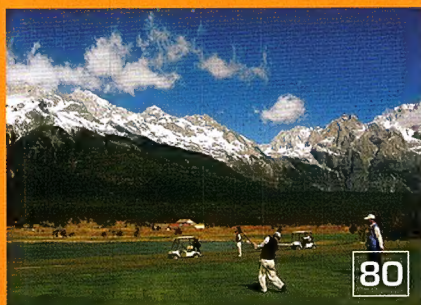


A bull boat on Lhasa River
(by Zheng Ligang)



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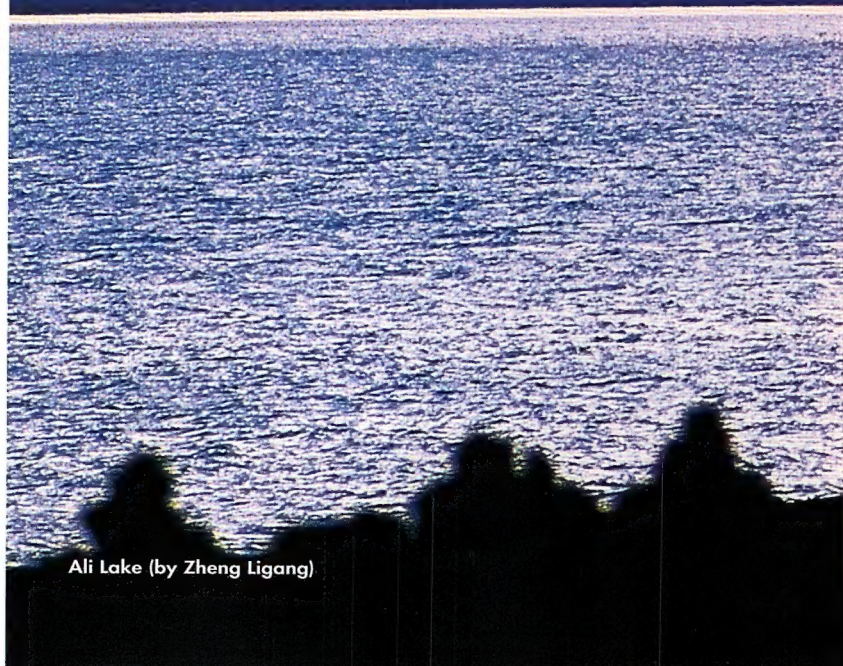
FROM THE EDITOR

A Road Less Travelled

Unable to leave well enough alone, adventures who constantly searching for the next tortured journey often baffle the average Joe. When most people are contented with having Mt. Everest as the backdrop in their pictures, they want to scale it. When the majority of the population is busy marvelling at the scenery on top of a skyscraper, they are making plan to bungee jump. When the crowd is shuddered upon hearing the thunderous roar of the torrents through rocky ravines, they hurriedly fetch their rafts.

This issue's feature story presents the journeys to the remotest places in western China. Even though the voyages may threaten to break these brave souls apart, but they are unstoppable. Overcoming blood-sucking organisms, altitude sickness, fluctuating weather conditions, as well as dangers and loneliness of the road, these addictive explorers seem to find gold in the journey. Read on to see how these people biked to the Himalayas (Roof of the World), descended to the deepest pit in Guangxi Zhuang Autonomous Region, rafted the Class V rapids of the Jinshajiang River in Yunnan Province, survived the road of death to the most inaccessible Motuo Village, and circled the sacred mountain in Tibet.

Would you like to pick the road less travelled on your next trip?



Ali Lake (by Zheng Ligang)





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SEPT / OCT



Oct 24-26
Macao

A-Ma, or Goddess Mazu, is a legendary figure believed to be the goddess of the sea, and is worshipped among many Chinese people in coastal areas. The A-Ma sculpture originally housed in Meizhou Island in Fujian Province will make its first appearance in Macao at the **A-Ma Cultural and Tourism Festival**.



Oct 12
Jingdezhen, Jiangxi Province

A millennium in the making of porcelain ware earned Jingdezhen the name "Capital of Porcelain". Activities at the **Jingdezhen International Pottery and Porcelain Festival** will last the whole month of October, including grand international ceramics show, exhibition on Jingdezhen porcelain as well as porcelain making demonstrations. Moreover, there will be tours to the city's ceramics factories and ruins of ancient kilns.

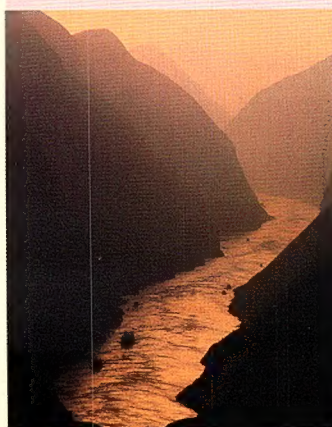
Oct 1-18
Beijing, Huangshan City and Shanxi Province

With nearly 450 artists from 22 countries giving outdoor performances and galas, the **6th China International Folk Art Festival** will be the largest ever in the country. Various types of performances, premiering in Huangshan Oct. 1, will cover the area surrounding the city until Oct. 7. From Oct. 8 to 11, 11 selected performances by foreign troupes will move to Beijing, and then to Shanxi the week after.

Half of the artistic troupes are national ones, such as the Polish State Folk Song & Dance Ensemble "Mazowsze", the Columbia National Ballet, the "Mtatsminda" Georgian National Ballet Ensemble known for its man tip-tap dance. Some performances will feature strong national flavours, such as the hula by Poe Manea Manihika Dance Ensemble of the Cook Islands, the tip-tap dance by the Fosbrook Youth Art Ensemble of England, the drum play of the Japanese Hachijo Island Taiko Group, the "Janchi Madang" Drama Ensemble of Inchon of the Republic of Korea, and the flag dance by the Flag Throwers of Cori of Italy.

Sept 10-Oct 7
Chongqing Municipality

The Three Gorges water conservation project built on the Yangtze River is designated to generate electrical energy equivalent to 50 million tn of coal per year. Situated at the upper reaches of the Yangtze River, Chongqing is one of the starting points to visit the Three Gorges. The **9th Chongqing Three Gorges International Tourism Festival** will be opened by a large-scale performance participated by 3,350 artists worldwide. Music, dances and the famous ancient Sichuan art "bian lian" (changing faces) will be performed.



Oct
Huangshan, Anhui Province

Huangshan, or the Yellow Mountain, is renowned for its splendid peaks and rare pine trees. The **Huangshan Mountain International Tourist Festival** will offer a traditional lantern show, folk performances, tours of Huangshan and ancient Huizhou architecture, investment seminars as well as travel exhibitions.

Oct 15-31
Yingge Ceramics Museum, Yingge, Taiwan

Yingge Town is the pottery centre on the island of Taiwan. The exquisite designs and wonderful arrangement of colours of the Yingge ceramics are of high acclaims. The **Yingge Ceramics Festival** will offer wonderful displays and educational hands-on pottery experience for visitors. On top of that, foreign pottery artists will also be invited here for cultural exchanges.

Sep 26-Oct 10
Qufu, Shandong Province

The **Qufu International Confucius Culture Festival** is held to commemorate the birth of Confucius (551-479 B.C.), the greatest philosopher and educator of ancient China who founded Confucianism. The main attraction of the festival is the inaugurating ceremony which comprised of large-scale ancient music and dances performance. Besides visiting the mausoleum of Confucius and his descendants, tourists can also try the Shandong cuisine.





Ancient Koguryo Kingdom Added to World Heritage List

The 28th Session of the World Heritage Committee inscribed 34 new sites on the World Heritage List, including the Capital Cities and Tombs of the Ancient Koguryo Kingdom in northern China. Altogether, China has got 30 cultural and natural heritage sites written into the World Heritage List.

Koguryo was a regime established by ethnic groups some 2,000 years ago. The new heritage property, which situated in Jilin and Liaoning provinces of China,

consisted of Wunu Mountain City, Guonei City, Wandu Mountain City, Haotaiwang Stele and 38 tombs of either Koguryo Kings or noble people.

The Wunu Mountain City, located in Huanren County of Liaoning Province, was the first mountain capital of the Koguryo Kingdom built in 37 BC. In Guonei City, a number of cultural relics have been unearthed including a pair of jade earrings and 20 gold-plated arrowheads. The Haotaiwang Stele, erected some 1,500 years ago, has 1,775 Chinese characters inscribed, showing the impact of Chinese culture on the Koguryo who did not develop their own writing.

First Temple of the Greatest Chinese Navigator Discovered

Zheng He, the legendary navigator of the Ming Dynasty (1368-1644), had made a total of seven epic sea voyages around most part of the world. Zheng He's trips spanned over 30 countries throughout the South Pacific, the Indian Ocean, the Persian Gulf and Africa. Some archeologists even believe that Zheng had discovered the America 72 years earlier than Christopher Columbus!

Recently, the first Zheng He Temple in the Chinese mainland was found in Hong Jian Village, off the coast of southeast China's Xiamen City. The small temple in Xiamen City occupies an area of less than 20 m². Built in the early 1600s, the temple has figures of Zheng He and his assistant Wang Jinghong for people to worship.

Hidden Section of Great Wall Unveils

A new section of the Great Wall was discovered in Hebei Province. It attracted people's attention because of its unusually fine decoration that differed from other part of the Wall.

The 430-year-old wall lies in the Qinhuangdao City. This section was first built at the end of the 14th century. Later, when the famous Ming Dynasty General Qi Jiguang was sent there to guard the northern borders, he ordered the wall to be rebuilt with bricks. Since most of his artisans were from South China's Fujian Province, the wall featured delicate carvings which reflects the southern style.

At present, dozens of watchtowers still stand firm on the nine-kilometre wall. Local authorities will carry out necessary renovations and may open the site for tourist in the near future.





Restoration of Yuanmingyuan Ruins

Beijing is about to complete its restoration work on the walls of the Yuanmingyuan Ruins. The Beijing municipal government has poured over 400 million yuan (~US \$50 million) into the Yuanmingyuan restoration project over the past 24 years, but it encountered many setbacks as the residents there refused to move out. The restored wall of 11,170-m long will engulf the replicated Yuanmingyuan Park that is planned to open in 2008.

Yuanmingyuan, often referred to as the Old Summer Palace, was unique in blending traditional Chinese gardening arts and Western architectures. The allied forces of Great Britain and France burned it down in 1860. At present, only small bits of ruins were left behind at the site.

Prehistoric Village Restored in Inner Mongolia

A prehistoric village has been restored at a Hongshan cultural site in Chifeng City, Inner Mongolia Autonomous Region. The site, which comprised of six old-style houses and a fishpond, covers more than six hectares of land in Hongshan Forest Park. The exhibit also includes dozens of sculptures of scenes from daily prehistoric life, including fishing, hunting and production of stone and chinaware implements.

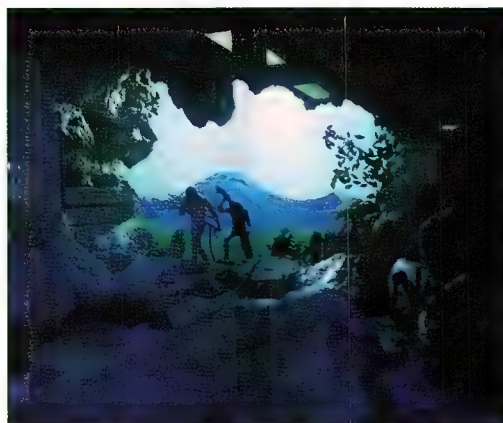
The ancient Hongshan culture is characterised by the delicate painted pottery pieces, large sacrificial sites, jade figurines of phoenixes and dragons.

Doubling National Museum before 2008 Olympics

China will close the country's national museum for two and a half years for expansion. The museum, which situates next to the Tiananmen Square, will be enlarged from about 65,000 m² to more than 150,000 m². The new buildings will include a cinema, rest areas, shops, and a total of 58,000 m² of exhibition space.

The work will begin next summer and expect to be completed before the 2008 Olympics.

Peking Man Site to be Revamped



Preservation work is to start at Zhoukoudian, the site of a major archaeological and anthropological find in China.

Repairs will be carried out on the caves where the remains of Peking Man, an ancient ancestor of humans, were found. Since Beijing's fluctuating climate is the biggest risk to fossils, some two million yuan (~US \$240,000) is being spent to protect individual places.

Potala's Second Stage Maintenance on the Way

The Potala Palace is conducting the second stage maintenance construction and all works have been progressing smoothly.

The Potala Palace is the most ancient construction in Tibetan history, which dated back to more than 1,300 years. Most temples in Tibet were damaged to different extents during the Cultural Revolution whilst the Potala Palace is the only ancient construction that has not been ruined. Started in 1989 and completed in 1994, the first stage of the maintenance project focused on the Red Palace (where the Dalai preaches) and the White Palace (Dalai's office and bed chamber). During the second stage, the focus will be on the maintenance and rebuilding the four underground stories, which are the foundation of the Palace.



Rid the Confusing English Signs in Shanghai

Singapore English road signs can be awkward and difficult to comprehend in some Chinese cities. Therefore, Shanghai officials have already authorised a panel of English language experts to correct these confusing English expressions on public signs and billboards.

The panel which includes overseas Chinese, linguists and lawyers, will be in charge of drawing up guidelines for translating road names and store names.

Names which were translated in straight manner in the past, like "Hu-Ning Expressway", will become "Shanghai-Nanjing Expressway" under the new guidelines in the future.



Jiuzhaigou Paradise Becoming the Davos of China

Sichuan Jiuzhaigou, China's Fairyland which is listed in the World Heritage, will be transformed into a paradise-like resort and convention centre in the near future.

The transformation is brought by the Jiuzhai Paradise International Resort and Convention Centre, which situates at the newly plotted out hub of Grand Jiuzhai International Tourism Zone.

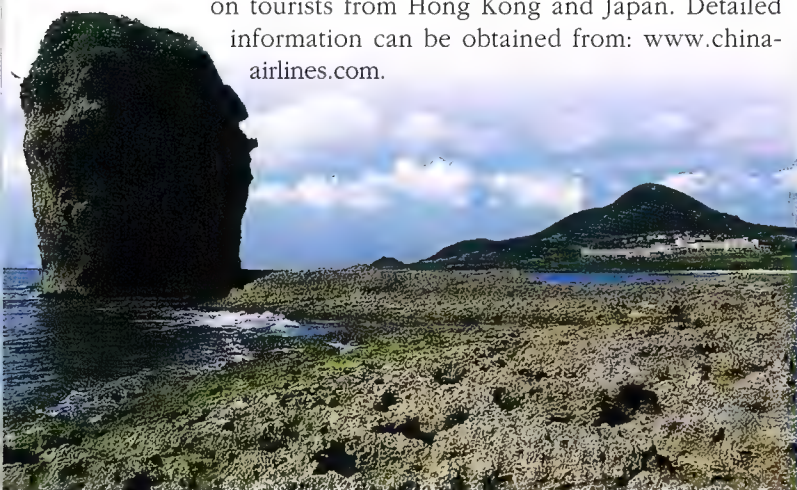
Covering 32,000 km² with an investment over two billion yuan (~US \$250 million), it is a comprehensive site integrating functions of conference, resort, spa, leisure and dwelling. In order to lower the impact on the environment, the giant steel structure of the resort is hidden behind the virgin forest. Apart from luxurious guest rooms, the resort consisted of a hot-spring centre that can hold 2,000 people in bath simultaneously.

The resort aims at becoming the Davos of China. With nine assembly halls and discussion rooms that are well equipped for world-levelled advanced conferences, it is already gaining prestige abroad.



China Airlines Launches New Packages

Taiwan Taiwan- China Airlines launches a series of new inbound tour packages named "Dynasty Package discovering Taiwan". Five major itineraries include the North Coast, Sun Moon Lake, Alishan, Kenting and the east coast from Taroko Gorge to Taitung. The packages have no arranged shopping excursions and are targeted on tourists from Hong Kong and Japan. Detailed information can be obtained from: www.china-airlines.com.



More Flights between US and China

United States Currently, passenger airlines in United States are limited to fly to five Chinese cities only. However, a new treaty will allow airlines from both nations to serve any city in the other country by 2010. Apart from United airlines and Northwest airlines that are allowed to serve mainland at present, Continental and Delta may soon join in. Also, United airlines will launch a new daily nonstop service between Chicago's O'Hare International Airport and Shanghai's Pudong International Airport in Oct 31 to meet the increasing travel demand.

Starbucks Hits Chinese Airport

Beijing Starbucks, the well-known international coffee retailer from the United States, will open a new outlet at the Beijing Capital International Airport on Oct 1. The outlet will cover 130 m², and would be the first Starbucks shop in a Chinese mainland airport. Starbucks, which operates more than 7,600 coffee shops around the world, has more than 35 outlets in Beijing already.

Air Macau Launched New Route to Seoul

Macao Air Macau just started a regular service on the Seoul-Macao route operating four flights weekly. The new route accommodates the mounting demand of passenger transport between the South Korea and Macao, which enjoy equal visa-free status.

With a number of new casinos coming on stream in Macao, Macao is getting more internationally renowned as the "Las Vegas in Asia".

Still Cool in Beijing's Hotels

Beijing The municipal government of Beijing cancelled a power cut plan of "2 hours on, 1 hour off" on air-conditioner operation in Beijing's star-rated hotels recently.

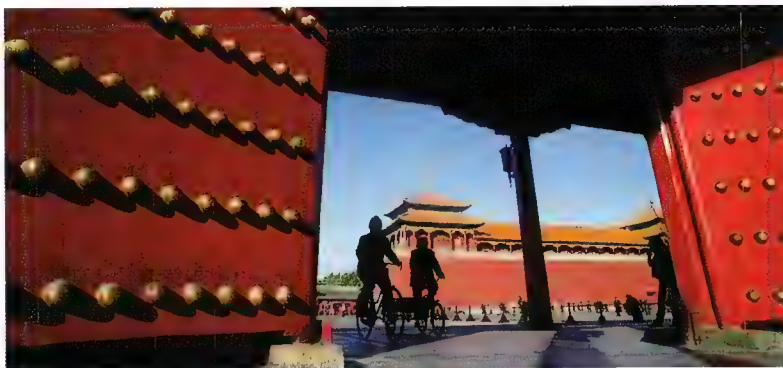
As the proposed measure may lower tourists' willingness to visit Beijing, officials were forced to withdraw the plan. However, the hotels were asked to save energy in other aspects. For instance, the hotels are advised to do laundry at night and keep air conditioners no lower than 26°C. Furthermore, hotel staff should not use elevator for less than five stories.

China is facing the most severe situation of power shortage since the 1980s. Beijing, which has about 60% of its power supply coming from other parts of the country, has already experienced brownout in the suburbs.



Airport Fee Included in Fare

China The airport construction fee, which travellers pay separately before boarding a flight, will be included in the airfares by the end of this year. The Civil Aviation Administration of China (CAAC) has drafted a circular for this new measure to become effective. According to the circular, the amount of the airport construction fee would depend on the distance of journey and type of aircraft, contrary to the current practice where travellers are charged a uniform fee.



Air China Launches New Route to Dubai

China Air China will be launching Beijing-Dubai air route which have three flights weekly from Sept 21. This route will use Boeing 767-200, which would depart Beijing at 5:30 p.m. and arrive in Dubai at 10:00 p.m. local time. Dubai is the gateway to Middle East and also the most important hub in the area. There are currently 65,000 Chinese people doing business in Dubai.

Europe Welcoming Chinese Tourists with Open Arms

China From Sept 1 onwards, Chinese citizens are allowed to travel to 32 European nations in tourist groups. Thrilled with this news, airlines, hotels and department stores in Europe are racking their brains to cater the needs of the oriental guests.

With flourishing economy, the number of outbound Chinese tourists reached 20 million in 2003, up more than 20% over the previous year. And according to the World Tourism Organisation's prediction, China will become the fourth biggest tourism source nation by 2020, with outbound tourists reaching 100 million.

Without doubt, China will be another crucial market for tourism industry in Europe apart from Japan. Some European travel-related agencies, like the Rail Europe that sells Eurail Pass, had already established their offices in Beijing, in order to introduce their services to the Chinese.

feature
story

Explore the Unexplored: **Adventure in the** **Wild West**



Writer's Travel Route

Escaping from the Hell's Gate

Photos & Article by Zheng Ligang

in Ngari

Everybody who has a special passion for Tibet knows that 2002 was the Year of Water Horse in the Tibetan calendar. It was the year to circle and worship the Kangrinboqe Peak, which happens once every 12 years. I had driven through Ngari several times, but still, my preparation began two years ahead of schedule. I never expected this spiritual trip would almost be the end of me. It was only by good luck that I survived.



Escaping from
the Hell's Gate
in Ngari



Through a phone call from my good friend in Tibet, I learned that the opening ceremony would be held on May 26. Since more than 50,000 people were expected to attend the gathering, it would be a wonderful opportunity to shoot pictures. I contacted Wu Qiguang, another good friend in Hong Kong, to discuss an itinerary.

From Shenzhen to Lhasa:
In the Highlands Once More

On May 16, after Mr. Wu and I received our permit to visit Ngari, we immediately set off from Shenzhen to Chengdu. Because of a delay with our luggage, we missed the Lhasa flight, which meant that our stay to adapt to the altitude would have to be shortened.

We arrived at Lhasa the next day. Both Wu and I had heavy photographic gear with us. Carrying the luggage, I felt exhausted because of the lack of oxygen. I knew it was only the beginning of the altitude sickness. There would be a headache in the evening, making sleeping difficult. But I knew I would be OK after a rest.

However, after checking into the hotel, we did not rest but went to look for a car instead. Coincidentally, a friend of my local friend was looking for someone to drive his old Honda jeep, from Lhasa to



Shiquanhe of Ngari. It was a pleasant surprise for us. Who would have expected that it was this vehicle which almost sent me to the gates of hell?

My heart sank when we saw the jeep, which hunched on the ground with four flat tyres. It took us quite some time to get it started, and the engine made its whole body shake. Unbelievably, we were told that it had just gone through a thorough maintenance check. We bought new tyres and repaired the engine, thinking everything else would be OK. What happened later showed that we made a big mistake, as a trusty vehicle is vital.

We made preparations and moved out quickly, another major mistake. We should have had more rest in Lhasa.

Even worse, I decided to change our route. Instead of driving along the Yarlung Zangbo River, which is a short cut, we chose to go to Xigaze via Gyangze, a place filled with ancient fortresses, white pagodas and colourful Tibetan customs. We planned to stay in Gyangze for a night, believing it would be a worthwhile visit though we had to cross two mountains, both more than 5,000 m above sea level. My companion agreed with me, but we forgot that it was taboo for travellers in the highlands to reach such a high altitude without having a good rest after arriving in



Lhasa, which is situated at 3,700 m above sea level. We would have to take the dangerous consequences later.

From Lhasa to Gyangze: **Two 5,000-m Mountains in a Day**

At 6 a.m. when Lhasa was veiled in mist, Wu and I were on our way to Mount Ganbala.

Its peak standing at 5,000 m above sea level, Ganbala offers the best position to view Lake Yamzho Yumco. Walking around, I felt dizzy and weak.

Going down the other side of the mountain, the dirt road was in very bad condition. Before long, we stopped because the exhaust pipe fell off. The jeep now roared as loud as a tractor. It was not a good beginning.

About the Author

Zheng Ligang is a photographer of 20 years living in Shenzhen, Guangdong Province. He loves exploring and photography. He has driven through Tibet alone several times and published various reports as well as two albums, namely *The Life in Eastern Tibet* and *Light of the Fantasy Dream*.



We found a mechanic's shop at Nagarze. The mechanic found that our vehicle had lost not only its

exhaust tube but also part of the suspension. Because of the terrible bumping, a hole had been made in the bottom of the car. As the small shop had limited tools, we could only get the exhaust pipe fixed, leaving all the other problems to be solved when we reached Gyangze.

Back on the road, we drove towards the Karela

Glacier Pass, which is 5,000 m above sea level. It was the second mountain we encountered on the same day, and our condition was deteriorating. My altitude sickness became more serious. When we reached the top of the mountain after passing the glacier, the vehicle was slanting. After applying the emergency brake, I found that we were sitting on the edge of a steep cliff above a lake. Chills ran down my spine. Wu was frightened too. I then realised that my poor driving was a reflection of the worsening altitude sickness.

We arrived in Gyangze at noon and went to a garage to get the exhaust pipe and suspension fixed. The worker found the car's fuel tank was leaking but he said it was not serious. Therefore, we had the fuel tank filled on our way back. The terrible daze and headache continued to gnaw me. It had been a hard day.

Previous page: I almost lost my life in Ngari, the place where I had driven through many times.

1. It's common to get lost driving in the wilderness in Ngari.
2. Friendly Tibetans
3. Getting the exhaust pipe fixed at a garage in Nagarze.
4. You always draw interest from the local people when you set your camera on a tripod.

From Gyangze to Lhasa: **Almost Fell into the Deep Valley**

Before we set off for Xigaze, we asked about the road conditions and everybody shook their head. We could choose one of the two roads from Lhaze to Xigaze: the one following the Chunian River was under maintenance, and the other went back to the Yarlung Zangbo River, which would make the journey longer.

We decided to take the shorter route along the Chunian River. Not long after we were on the road, we found that it was not a road at all. We had to drive on the narrow embankment, which was made of piles of sand and pebbles. When there was a vehicle coming from the opposite direction, it became extremely dangerous.

Soon we found the road had vanished in front of us. A road construction seemed to be under way, but there was no sign to indicate how to detour. It turned out that there was no construction project but the original road had been flooded away. We had to drive carefully on the wheel marks left by previous cars, which extended into the river to reach the other bank.

What should we do? There was no other choice but to drive across the water. Grasping the wheel tightly, I forced the jeep into the river. Before long, the vehicle got stuck. The engine was still working, but the car refused to move. A few Tibetan men offered to help for a charge of 200 yuan. I used full power while the young Tibetans pushed, but the car remained dead still. Three jeeps came and dashed by one by one. I asked them for help but was rejected. I felt even more annoyed when we saw the foreign passengers from these jeeps photographing us after their jeeps parked safely on the other bank of the river.

Finally, the young Tibetans found a tractor to draw our vehicle out, under the condition that we paid them 100 yuan more.

It was noon when we arrived in Xigaze. Opposite the restaurant where we had lunch is the Eighth Hospital of the PLA, which claims to be the best hospital in Tibet for altitude sickness. Who would have guessed that three days later, I would be carried into this hospital?

We decided to try for Xigaze before dark. After driving over Cuola Mountain, we found ourselves in an open basin. The road surface was smooth, but the steering wheel was broken, forcing the vehicle to the left. In the end, the vehicle dashed into a shallow ditch on the left side of the road. We got out of the car and found that the straight bar was broken, exposing a long rod. Luckily we were in the basin when it broke. If it had happened a few minutes earlier, when we were on the 5,000-m-high Cuola Mountain, we would have been smashed into the deep valley.

The problem had to be solved in a repair shop. At this moment, a jeep carrying tourists from Korea stopped. Its Tibetan driver enthusiastically helped us fix the car, which

allowed us to drive slowly to Lhasa to find a factory.

Our jeep rolled into the county seat of Lhasa before dusk. In the repair shop, a worker came up to us and asked in Sichuan dialect, "What's the trouble?"

"The straight bar is broken and we hope it can be welded."

He crouched to have a look. "Oh, my God, who was driving this car? Did any passengers get injured?"

When hearing our reply "no", he could not help crying out, "How lucky you were!"

From Lhasa to Sangsang: **Altitude Sickness Worsened**

I got up early on May 20, still suffering headache and sleepiness. I thought it was the result of the previous day's



hard work and lack of rest, but actually, it was the narcosis caused by altitude sickness. Despite the physical suffering, I still hoped that we could reach the county seat of Coqen, or even further to Gerze.

Not long after we crossed a bridge on the Yarlung Zangbo River, the road began to rise up, leading us to a mountain pass. Outside the car window, the scenery bathed in the morning rays was beautiful, but I was too weak to take photos. Wu suggested that he take over the wheel to give me a break, but I insisted on driving, believing there was nothing wrong with me.

We got out of the jeep to relax after driving by a lake. Usually, I would be excited to see a lake, but this time, my spirit was low. After passing another slope, the road began to go down. The road surface was straight and smooth, but I drove badly. The car zigzagged forward, and my sight was blurred. Several times, the vehicle almost ran off the road. I was silent all along the way, not as I usually did — talking and joking with my companion.

Finally, I noticed the car had left the road and was dashing into a roadside ditch. Only when I heard Wu's loud cry did I completely wake up to press the brake. The vehicle stopped on the edge of the road. I went down to



check if the direction control bar had gone wrong again and found it was all right. So the problem was with me. Now I had to agree to let Wu sit at the wheel.

At noon, we arrived at a small town Sangsang. I felt very uncomfortable so we had to take a rest. We ordered noodle soup in a restaurant. But before the food was served, I fell asleep at the table. When I woke up to see the

noodle soup, I had no appetite at all. Everything seemed to be revolving around me. I knew the situation was serious. Following the restaurant owner's advice, we went to a nearby clinic, but the doctor was out briefly. We had no other choice but to find a hotel. I took all the medication I had for altitude sickness and went to bed. When I woke up, without knowing after how long, I felt my face was swelling and my heart was beating fast. Since the headache was less serious, I felt better and regained my strength. I suggested to Wu that we continue our journey, trying to reach Coqen in the day. Considering my situation, Wu insisted that we returned to Lhasa. I disagreed because we had just driven 130 km from Lhasa to Sangsang and I did not want to waste our time and energy in a detour journey. I pretended that there was nothing wrong with me. Wu accepted my idea reluctantly but insisted that we went to see a doctor before getting

1. Suffering altitude sickness, I drove the vehicle off the road on the way to Sangsang. (by Wu Qiguang)
2. Tibetan women dancing on the way to Lhasa.
3. You must pay attention when driving in Tibet.

Escaping from the Hell's Gate **in Ngari**

back on the road. Since the doctor of the nearby clinic was not back yet, so we set off again.

Our next stop was the 22nd Road Maintenance Squad, which meant that we were to drive from 4,500 m above sea level to 4,800 m. It was asking for death in my physical condition, but I did not realise the seriousness of my sickness. According to medical theory, I was in the third stage of altitude sickness, with symptoms such as headache, face swelling, fast heartbeat and inaccurate judgement, which indicated the beginning of a coma.

No.22 Maintenance Squad: **54 Hours in Coma**

For the rest of our journey, Wu drove. After entering Nganring, the landscape became particularly attractive. In front of us were poetic scenes of valleys, flat lands and lakes, all good for photography.

When Wu stopped the car to take photos, I sat in the car, motionless and senseless. Wu could not understand why I was acting differently from what I usually did — being the first to leave the vehicle and the last to get back whenever there was attractive scenery. He thought I was too tired, but in fact I was in semi-coma.

We passed the 22nd Road Maintenance Squad and reached the crossroads of the main road in Ngari. I woke up when Wu stepped on the brake. Pointing at the road sign

marking the directions and the distance to Shiquanhe, he asked, "Little Zheng, here is the crossing. So which road should we take?" I pointed to the north and replied, "Coqen." He opened the map and found it was 270 km from where we were, which meant at least six hours' drive. Now Wu noticed that I was getting worse; my mind was messy and my words were not clear. It would be extremely dangerous if we drove into Ngari like this. He refused to listen to me and decided to make a U-turn to drive back to the 22nd Road Maintenance Squad and stay there for the night.

Thanks to Wu's consideration, my life was saved. When we returned to the road squad, I could still walk slowly, but I had to ask others to help carry my luggage. Wu asked for some butter tea for me. I took the medication I had with me and went to bed, without knowing my sleep would lead me to a coma of 54 hours.

Double Crises

Wu thought that I would be fine after a good sleep. He busied himself handling the vehicle when the engine suddenly died out. He found the mechanics recommended by our host. They checked the jeep carefully. When they opened the cover of the engine, they took out a lot of broken parts and copper wires. The motor was totally broken and had to be replaced. Seeing the wreck, Wu was shocked. This poor vehicle could have sent both us to hell!





He came back to the room to wait for me to wake up so that he could let me know the situation, not knowing that I was at the doors of death.

By the morning of May 21, I had been sleeping for a day and a night, but still showed no sign of awakening. Wu began to realise how severely my condition was. Knowing that I was suffering from a coma that might lead to death, he was struck with fear. He must send me to a hospital, but how? Our car was broken. Where could he get help in this wilderness?

Suddenly, he remembered Saga situated 70 km away, where he could find a hospital. Lhasa might be better for treatment, but it would take two days to reach. Wu looked for vehicles going to Saga but all the trucks were carrying pilgrims to the holy mountain, not a single one was going to Saga.

Wu called the Public Security Bureau of Saga County. The phone call went through, but that their vehicles were all out. At this crucial moment, Wu thought about calling my wife in Shenzhen, only he could not find my home number. He thought about asking for help from Hong Kong, but the local phone was for domestic calls only. Then he realised that even if he could call Hong Kong, the help would be too far away to reach us.

My Head and Face Turn Black

When Wu returned to the room, I had been in coma for 40 hours, having had no water or food. The situation was dire. At dusk, the host came and said to Wu, "Mr. Zheng's head and face were so swollen and dark, and his neck had become so thick, that it appears he is dying. You must do something." He then rushed out to call his friend in Saga, asking him to send a car here. His friend called back, saying that the county hospital had a car, but was sending a patient to Xigaze. We had to find a vehicle by ourselves. Wu stood in the road to block trucks passing by, but could not find a single one going to Saga.

Altitude Sickness:

Above 3,000 m, you must have a two-day rest each time your altitude increases 1,000 m. Along with the drop in air pressure and the decrease of oxygen, your physical balance is affected. First, breathing speeds to take in more oxygen, red blood cells increase to strengthen the blood's ability to carry oxygen. When you breathe fast, you exhale more carbon dioxide and lower the body's acidity, which may cause headache, difficulty in breathing, nausea, insomnia and weakness. If the sickness is not serious, you'll recover after two days' rest. But if it is serious, you should take oxygen therapy and return to lower altitude.

Usually, travellers should spend two days resting in Lhasa before they go on their journey. In serious cases, during the second stage, the patient will suffer pneumoedema; if he does not retreat to lower altitude, he will enter the third stage, encephaledema. The patient loses judgement, suffers illusions and finds it difficult to move. At this stage the patient must be sent to a hospital, otherwise he will go into coma, the edge of death.

Wu had a hard night, having one nightmare after another. At daybreak, he went out to look for vehicles again. Outside a hotel, he saw two trucks and a jeep parked. He learned that they belonged to a salt lake inspection team from the Chinese Academy of Sciences in Beijing. The team had more than 20 members and eight or nine vehicles. Wu went straight to the team leader. After telling the whole story, Wu asked for a vehicle to take me to the hospital in Saga. The answer, however, was a polite "no". The team leader explained that they had their task to carry out, so they could not help us. Nevertheless, he gave Wu an oxygen bag for emergency use. Disappointedly, Wu returned to our room and inserted the oxygen tube into my mouth. While sitting in the room watching me, he became increasingly scared. Never had this 60-year-old man felt so helpless.

My Album Saves My Life

After a while, the team leader of the inspection team came to see me. All he could do, he said, was to send his members to help us start our own vehicle. But how could a jeep with a broken motor and empty battery be started?

At the depth of disappointment, an idea came to Wu. He took out a copy of *The Life of Eastern Tibet*.

1. When you drive alone into Ngari, it means danger. (by Wu Qiguang)
2. A Tibetan-style teahouse in Xigaze

Pointing at the photos and articles, Wu said, "This young man is a very intelligent photographer and a fan of Tibet. He wants to introduce the beauty of Tibet to the rest of the world to help promote its development." The team members also admired the book and Wu presented more copies.

Meanwhile, Wu raised his request for the second time. He offered to use his whole set of precious cameras, which cost more than 100,000 yuan, as payment, if he could get a vehicle to send me to the Saga hospital. The team leader made a phone call to report the issue to the authorities in Beijing. The Beijing authorities gave a negative answer, but this time the team leader said firmly, "Saving a man's life is the most important thing. I'll take the responsibility of my decision." A stranger voluntarily gave me such help, despite the possible punishment upon him for not following orders. He is indeed a great man. I would have been deeply touched if I had been conscious.

Several men carried me onto the back seat of the jeep. The team leader took the front seat while Wu and another team member sat on either side of me. The 4x4 dashed towards Saga like an arrow off the bow.

From Saga to Xigaze: **Back to Life**

The hospital in Saga, a small county seat, drew me back from death. The doctors there were experts in treating altitude sickness. After I was sent to the ward, the team leader left. But I will never forget his help.

The doctors immediately gave me transfusion and oxygen therapy. The hospital also assigned a male nurse to take care of me. However, the doctor in charge of me told Wu that what they did were only emergency measures. Since I had been in coma for three days and my case was very serious, the treatment required was beyond the ability of a border town hospital with limited equipment and medication. He said I must be sent to the Eighth Hospital of the PLA in Xigaze for thorough treatment.

Wu asked the hospital to provide a vehicle. The hospital accepted his request and also agreed to have a doctor to go with me. It would take more than a dozen hours to cover the 500 km between Saga and Xigaze.



I looked better after receiving the treatment, including transfusion of three bottles of medication. The first stage of treatment is crucial for a patient of altitude sickness. If the patient cannot get proper treatment in this stage, he or she may suffer after effects. It seemed that I was all right, owing to

the treatment of the Saga People's Hospital.

I finally came back after wandering for 54 hours in my dreams.

My First Urine in Three Days

Vaguely, I saw the ceiling, the moving shapes, the transfusion bottle, and felt the pain in my hands and feet where needles were injected. And I could not wait to relieve myself. I shouted, trying to get up, but a nurse with a dark face and strong build stopped me, pressing my body forcefully. Suddenly, I saw Wu coming in. Patting my face with his hand, he said, "Little Zheng, you are suffering from altitude sickness. Now it's impossible for us to go to the holy mountain; we are in a Hospital in Saga. I'm looking for a car to send you to Xigaze for treatment...." I could not get the rest of his words, possibly fainting again. When I woke up again, there was still the need to urinate. With all the strength I had, I shouted that I wanted to stand up; I wanted to urinate. Somebody came and helped me to get on my feet. I was too weak to stand, but by leaning against the wall, I was able to fill a large bowl. It was the first time in three days that I could relieve myself, which indicated my return to the human world.

Mr. Wu, the poor guy, had almost collapsed. For three days, he could not eat or sleep. On our way to Xigaze, I was placed in the back seat in the jeep, with oxygen lines in my mouth. Wu sat beside me; the doctor sat by the driver in the front seat. I was not quite clear about what was going on. Wu told me later that the doctor was pessimistic about my situation. Though I had showed some signs of life, there might be changes, and I could die suddenly on the way. So the doctor was doubly careful in carrying out his duty.

We picked up our luggage at the 22nd Road Maintenance Squad and continued the drive towards Xigaze.

Xigaze: A Man Wept

After an overnight journey, we arrived in Xigaze at 6 a.m. on May 23. When the jeep was parked at the Eighth Hospital of the PLA, I finally woke up. Pulling and carrying, several people took me to the emergency room.

Lying in the sickbed, I took medicine and received transfusions and injections continuously. I was awoken one moment, and fell asleep the next, losing all sense of time. The doctor and nurses checked me in the morning and evening to record my temperature, blood pressure and other data. Very often, the doctor raised his fingers for me to count. Every time I gave the correct answer. Patients of altitude sickness may suffer after-effects, and some may even suffer from permanent brain damage. Luckily, it did not happen to me.

The doctor came and gave a bottle of blue liquid. Opening it up, he asked me to drink all of it. I tasted and found it was very salty. Though I had not taken anything except medicine for several days, I found the liquid too salty to swallow. I asked the doctor what it was and he told me it contained potassium and sodium, which were necessary for recovering from altitude sickness. "You're weak because of the lack of these elements. So you must drink it down," he said.

On the 24th, when I was much better, I thought about calling home. My wife and daughter must have been worrying about me since they could not reach me for days. Luckily Wu had called them the previous day and told them I was all right. When the phone was through, I heard my wife's scared voice and sobs. It seemed that I was making the call from the other world. All of a sudden, I realised how much I had hurt my family. My wife waved goodbye when I was leaving Shenzhen. How could she have expected that I was almost going to die?

After three days' treatment, I eventually recovered and could walk and eat.

On the 26th, I heard the news report from the radio: "Today is the 15th day of the fourth lunar month in the Year of the Water Horse, according to the Tibetan calendar. It is the beginning of the circling and worshipping the holy mountain. In Tarqin at the foot of the Kangrinboqe, a grand sutra-streamer ceremony was held and attended by about 50,000 pilgrims from India, Nepal, China and other

countries. People gathered here to attend the once in 12 years event..." Tears filled my eyes. I did not want to cry, though I had good reasons to. What was I? I was neither a pilgrim nor an explorer. All I wanted was to take photos.

When I stepped into the Shandon Tower in Xigaze and saw Mr. Wu in his room, we embraced each other happily. Now, I could no longer hold back my tears. There were too much to think about, too much gratitude, my coming back to life, the lost opportunity and the unfinished mission.

1. The Eighth Hospital of the PLA in Xigaze, which saved my life.
(by Wu Qiguang)
2. Trying to attend the grand ceremony of circling the holy mountain of Kangrinboqe, the author almost lost his life.

Postscript

While planning this trip, I concentrated on how to take photos to best reflect the subject, but neglected the journey. I was in a hurry and did not follow the rules. As a result of the rapid rise in altitude, I got altitude sickness, which almost killed me.

The key problem was the burning attitude. It is wisest for a traveller to think "For difficulties and dangers are far away. The truth is that difficulties are right beside you, under your feet. You must follow the law of nature, and if you break the law, you have to pay heavily."





White Water Rafting in Yunnan

Photos & Article by Zhang Shaohong

This is the story of the seven unforgettable days rafting on the Lijiang River in Yunnan Province last October. The adventure would take me 230 thrilling kilometres from the lower reaches of Hutiaoxia (Tiger Leaping) Gorge to Jin'an Bridge. But death might be waiting around the corner, for this was Class V river rafting.



White Water Rafting

in Yunnan



As experienced guides can tell you, this section of the Jinshajiang River promises thrilling Class V rapids from the water at Daju all the way to the journey's end at Jin'an Bridge.

Three-Metre High of White Water

The river is like a living thing. Every year it has different flow patterns and water levels, and so the rapids and shoals in the river change too. What was once a difficult section might now have become a calm stretch of water, and Class V rapids could appear in the once tranquil places.

Two hours after setting out on the first day of our trip, we heard the distant rumblings of our first rapids. These were graded as Class V and several world-class guides have capsized there in the past.

Well before we arrived, we took to the bank and walked forward to scout ahead and get a good look at the water. Unexpected changes are not unusual, so it's important to inspect the rapids especially at the point where the rafts will enter. The guides have to rely on their experience to avoid any potential problems.

After an hour or so of inspection, we cast off from the

bank and paddled slowly into the main stream.

Sitting at the bow of our raft, waiting to enter the rapids from the calm water, we had a feeling of occupying a commanding position on the river for it dropped away steeply in front of us.

Jiyao, my brother, turned the raft into the first wave as we entered white water. I would have soon been in the water if it were not for a tight hold on the bow rope. The first wave was followed by another over three metres high coming at us from the right. Jiyao immediately started a turn to the right so that we could get our bow into this new wave. His reaction was immediate as he dug his paddle into the water without a moment of hesitation, but the wave was just coming at us too quickly.

Trapped Underwater

Seeing we weren't going to manage to meet the onrush of water at a good angle I instinctively threw my weight to the bow, which was sure to be thrown high.

1. The rafting has attracted tourists both at home and abroad.
2. Professional gears are the must.
3. The new Class V rapids can appear in the once tranquil places.

Rafting Tips

Preparing the Equipment

As a manager of the rafting company, I arrived at Lijiang three days before the official departure date. We had to check the rafts and their equipment and also purchase essentials like food and water. When all was ready we were off to Daju for the final preparations at our point of embarkation.

It takes care and attention to detail when readying the rafts and support boats. The loads must be well and lashed down or they will be lost if a capsize should occur.

We worked for more than five hours on the riverbank at Daju getting our truckload of equipment in order. Our flotilla would have a rescue craft in the lead, as is usual on unfamiliar or difficult sections, followed by the rafts for the guests and a sweep boat for safety in the rear.



The Crew

Bert is a senior boatman with over 20 years of experience working in the Grand Canon in the United States. My elder brother Jiyou

and I would handle the rescue craft. This was a Cataract, which is shaped much like a couple of bananas tied together. We were to carry equipment and at the same time be ready to provide assistance and first aid in an emergency. Steve and Robert, a professional guide from Chile, would each take charge of a party of guests on a raft.

The guides sit at the back of their rafts. Their job is to watch the water ahead, directing and coordinating the others who sit paddling to each side.



Paddle Commands

Teamwork is essential, so the first thing to be done before the start of any trip on the water is to practice pulling together on the standard words of command which are "forward paddle, back paddle, left turn, right turn, and stop". There is one more command "high side" when everyone must move quickly to try to get the raft level again in rough water.

The rafts are capsized intentionally during training so that everyone can become familiar with the emergency procedures.

For Safety

- ☆ Before committing to any rafting trip, it's a must to check out the difficulty of the river section.
- ☆ Make sure you are going with capable organisers, and in particular check that there will be properly qualified professional guides.
- ☆ Get a list of the equipment that will be provided and what you will need to get for yourself.
- ☆ And yes, buy an accident insurance policy.

Others

Hutiaoxia (Tiger Leaping) Gorge has been developed as a scenic area so it has good transport facilities and hotels. But of course once you set out on the rafts you have to make do with the food and sleeping bags that are carried on the trip.

On the Jinshajiang River with its white water rapids, a rescue craft is essential to lead the way.

You can get the personal equipment you need from a professional outfitter. This will include a safety helmet, life jacket, and wet suit.

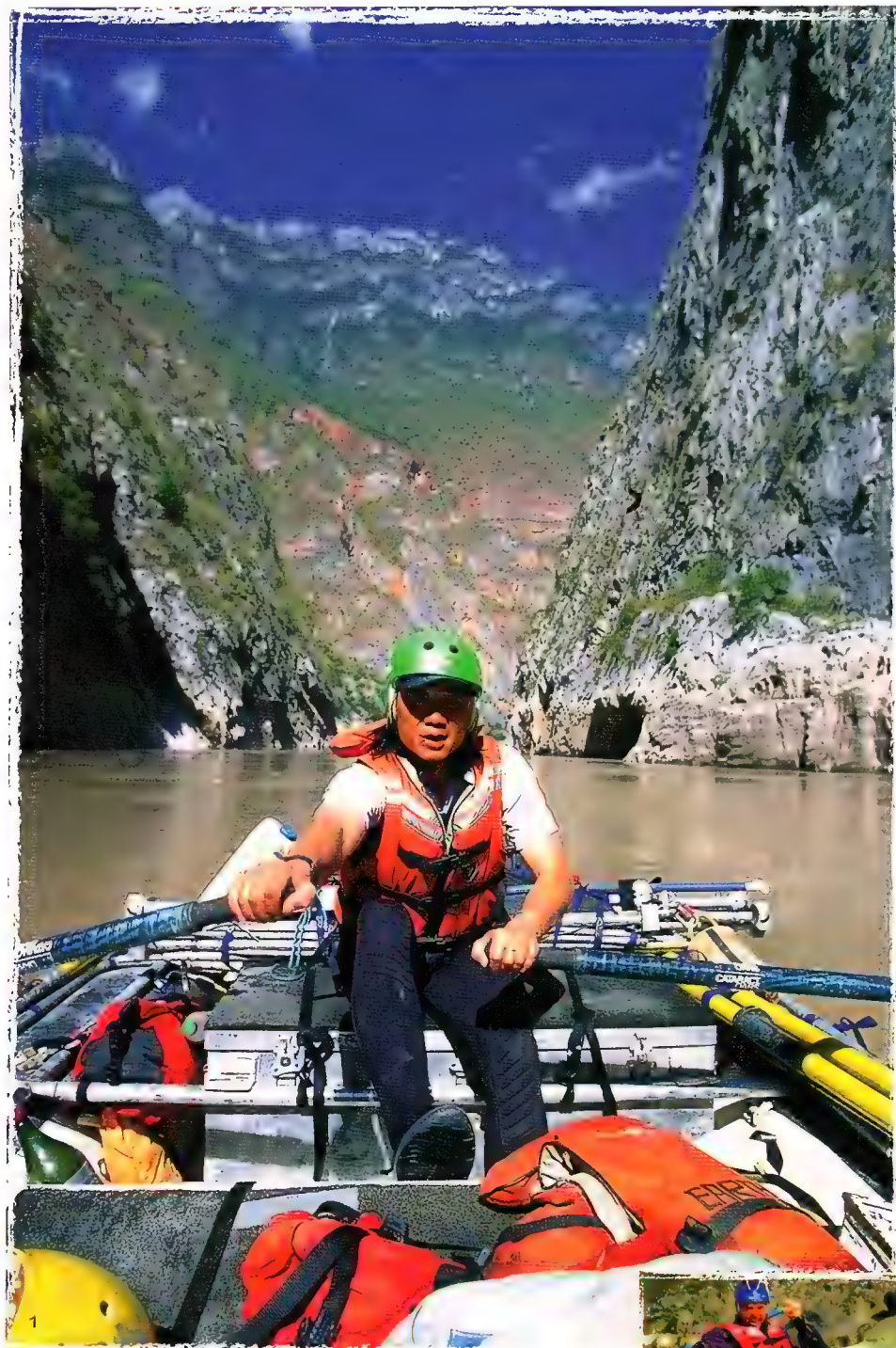
About the Author:

Zhang Shaohong, born in Jiangsu Province and now is the manager of Sichuan Dadi Exploration Co., Ltd. He has been interested in taking adventure such as mountaineering and rafting etc.



White Water Rafting

in Yunnan



Next thing I knew, I was hearing muffled sounds of turbulence. I was in the water and my feet were trapped. I realised at that moment that we had capsised.

Under the swirling water, I held my breath for dear life. I sensed that the upturned boat was not far above my head. But no matter how I twisted and turned I couldn't reach it. It seemed that the water had taken me. Was this what it was like to die? The pressure of the water made me feel there was no air in my lungs. I couldn't hold out any longer. But then the water gave me back and my head was in the air

long enough to snatch a life-saving breath before I went under again. And I had managed to grab the boat.

After how long I don't know, the wild water finally calmed again. With my grip on the rope on the side of the upturned boat I did my best to keep my head above water. But the rope which should have been on the bottom of the boat was gone. There was no way to get a grip on the smooth underside of the boat and I had already used up most of my strength in the rapids. I tried several times to climb up on the boat but without success.

Fortunately the water was quieter now and I could rest a little and get my breath back. But this was the time for a new scare, for as I looked around I couldn't see my brother.

It turned out that he was under the middle section of the upturned boat and had chosen to stay there for a while until the water calmed down. Here he had found a small airspace for his head between the bottom of the boat and the water.

He had tried to get out from under the boat but found that he was trapped by a dry-bag of equipment and a rope. Many people have been drowned



when they found themselves trapped below water by a rope or waterweeds after they fell out of a boat. So all rafters now carry a sharp knife in front of their chest. After he cut the rope, Jiyao climbed up onto the upturned boat from the other side and soon pulled me up too.

Stitching up a Cut Mouth on My Own

After more than an hour of effort with help from the others, we finally managed to get our boat to the shore before yet another set of rapids could appear.

"It looks like you need stitches in your mouth," Robert said to me.

With these words, he reached for the first-aid kit. It was not until that moment that I realised there was blood on my chest and that I was speaking rather strangely. There was a large cut on the right hand corner of my mouth.

"Are you good at sewing?" he asked.

"I've done it several times, but just things on boats," I said.

After I had stitched up the wound myself, Steve who was helpfully videotaping the entire operation said to me solemnly, "Not bad, but a little asymmetrical. Maybe it would be better if you were to sew up the other corner as well."

For the rest of the trip, I could only take food slowly with the help of a tube, and of course, I concentrated on beer and wine.

We Bypass the Huapotan

We didn't know what still lay ahead of us. The various rapids we encountered the next day were showing the effects of the year's low water levels.

On the third day we came to the "Huapotan" rapids. Several years ago a landslide had sent a huge rock into the river creating these Class V rapids.

We stopped our boats by the rock and then climbed a small hillside in order to get as close as we could to the rapids. The low water level had exposed a huge rock which used to be submerged under the water and there was now a large whirlpool there. The white water thundered and foamed. We were close enough to feel the tremendous impact as the forces of nature were unleashed.

The Huapotan, together with an obstacle not far downstream and another set of rapids, forming an S-shaped rafting run. We had previously made several successful trips through this section. But with the lower water level this year, several additional dangerous obstacles were now exposed downstream, making rafting more difficult.

If one of our rafts overturned at the start of the rapids, it would probably be carried along in the main stream of the current towards a wall of rock lying in wait downstream.



We decided that even if we could avoid this rock, we could not be one hundred percent sure that we could rescue anyone in the water. We just weren't certain that we could get them to safety on the bank before they were swept on into the next set of rapids.

According to several local residents we came across on the river bank, just a week previously a large steel-hulled gold prospecting boat was cut in two on a rock on the opposite side of the river. It was now lying on the riverbed with its owner and a crewman missing.

The guides decided that we had no choice but to abandon our plan of rafting through the "Huapotan" rapids. Instead we had to carry all the boats and all the equipment along the steep mountainside.

On To the Ancient Stone City

Carrying the boats cost us more than half a day. In order to save time, we cancelled the leisurely lunch we had planned for the fourth day. Instead, we made do with a quick meal of cheese and ham sandwiches as we relaxed for a while on some relatively peaceful water before entering the gorge.

Not long after lunch was over, we heard the rumbling of falling water downstream at the gorge. The lead boat signalled us to pull in to the shore as soon as possible. For most of the length of the river running through the gorge, steep cliffs run down both sides making it very difficult to draw into the side. It would not be prudent to rush into such a gorge without first checking the conditions ahead.

The scenery of the gorge is best experienced from the river. Floating along on the water brings a feeling of freedom and relaxation. On both sides the cliffs reach up to the sky so steeply they might have been carved from the rock.

From time to time we catch a sight of wildlife on the cliffs. In some places wonderful rock formations stand

1. I stitched up a cut mouth on my own
2. Go well up to bridle
3. Working together toward a common end

White Water Rafting in Yunnan

as silent witnesses of ancient geological changes. Looking at them I feel the power of nature.

The slopes are not quite so steep between the two main gorges. Here generations of the local Naxi people have reworked the mountainsides into terraced fields. Here and there are scattered the white-walled houses of the Naxi families, creating a unique gorge scenery peculiar to the Jinshajiang River.

Built of stone, the ancient city of Baoshan is famous in the area. Whenever we pass this way we spend half a day visiting this historic place. First seen from the riverbank, the ancient city resembles a mushroom growing in the gorge. It takes some 45 minutes to climb up to the city gates.

The city dates back to the Yuan Dynasty (1279-1368) and is said to be one of the birthplaces of the Naxi ethnic group. It is a natural fortress kept safe by steep cliffs and by the Jinshajiang River to the east which explains why the Naxi people chose to build their city here. It is a wonder in stone for not only are the buildings made of stone but also such things as kitchen ranges and tools for daily use.

Relaxing on the Beach

Once out of the gorge, the river becomes wider and the scenery changes as distant horizons return. Around 4 pm, we begin to look out for a good beach on which to make camp.

Beach camping is the best way to relax after the intense action of the day. It is one of the many real pleasures that come from travelling on the river. Here in this unspoilt place, the river is free from any pollution.

We pulled into the shore and formed a human chain to pass the camping equipment up the beach. This done we took off our rafting gear and sat on the sand. Enjoying the sunshine we recalled the excitements of the trip over a beer or two. This is a carefree "happy hour" in the rafting day.

A good dinner with lots of food is also an indispensable part of camping on the beach.

It's not unusual for us to be so busy having fun that we forget to pitch the tents. But this section of the river is in a sub-tropical zone, so it's not cold at night. When sleep calls, all we need is a sleeping bag and a bit of open ground. There is something special about sleeping out in the open under the stars.

Through the Hongmenkou

The rumbling sound of distant rapids is the cue for the guides to start exchanging knowing glances.

Hongmenkou is the name given to the bottle-neck gap where the wide river suddenly narrows at Hongmenkou. Here several families live along the banks of the Jinshajiang River. At the next stretch of quiet water downstream, there's a place where it's easy to pull up out of the water. This would be where I would get my only opportunity to take action photographs of Class V rafting.

While the guides spent an hour or so observing the currents from various angles and choosing the best line to take for shooting the rapids, I was looking for the best spot to take pictures. As we were making our preparations, I saw many of the local villagers gathering nearby.

I couldn't see the boats set off but there was no need, for the yells of encouragement from the local people soon let me know when they were coming.

They were an eye-catching sight on the slowly moving river as the boats floated gently down towards the sudden shock waiting for them as they met the rapids. As each raft dropped into the white water, it disappeared from my lens, lost in the huge waves. The sweep boat following in the rear was last

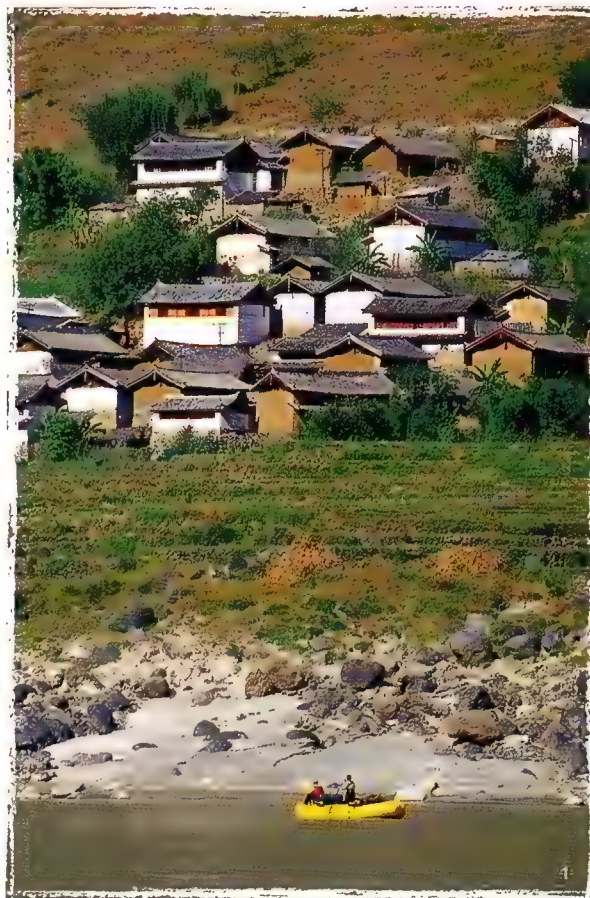
to make the drop. Its bow shot up in the air as it hit a wall of water head-on and if the crew had not pulled off such a very good "high side" maneuver, I should surely have got some good photos of a capsise.

Once we were downstream of Hongmenkou, we saw more gold prospecting boats. They are increasing in number every year. It seems true that the Jinshajiang (golden sands) River really has golden sand.

On hearing about this, an American crew member asked me whether I could help him buy some golden sand as a souvenir. I asked him, "Did you drink plenty of river water when you rafted through the Hongmenkou just now?"

"Yes some," he said.

I said, "Well then, why bother to buy any more? You've just drunk water that is sure to have the golden sand in it. So the sand is inside you now. What better souvenir could you ever have?"



A Roller Coaster Ride and the Captain Disappears

On the sixth day of our trip, we came across a series of tremendous parallel waves that would sweep us along in a particularly exhilarating way. At first sight, a progression of huge waves, following one after another may appear frightening, but provided there are no dangerous obstacles downstream, it's just great fun to ride them.

Being thrown from peak to trough is not something that can be adequately described, it really has to be experienced. We were riding nature's own roller-coaster.

Just when we were fully engaged with our roller-coaster ride, we heard a call for help on the radio, "Someone's fallen in the water." Jiyao quickly took us into a quieter stretch of water and steadied the boat, but looking around we could see no sign of anyone in the water.

After what seemed like a long time, the news came, "It was Steve who fell out of the boat. He's now safely on shore with the crew."

But how could the captain of a raft disappear in the water when the boat didn't capsize? We got the details from Steve later.

While directing the crew as they went over one big wave after another, Steve had been thrown out of the boat



as the stern shot upwards on a huge wave and he was soon dragged down by the underwater currents.

To make matters worse, this happened after he had just called for "forward paddle". When he returned to the surface thanks to his life jacket, he quickly shouted, "back paddle." But the noise of the rushing water

1. The ancient stone city of Naxi people
2. A roller coaster ride
3. Happy hour at beach camping



White Water Rafting

in Yunnan



drowned out his voice. As he tried to shout again, he was pulled back down. With a great effort he managed to get back to the surface, but by then the boat was already a good distance away.

It is the team's job to paddle while the captain gives the directions. When they heard the command "forward paddle" they concentrated all their efforts on paddling. Nobody noticed the captain wasn't there until someone in the front saw they were heading straight for a rock and the captain seemed to be doing nothing at all. It was then they turned around to find Steve was no longer on the boat.

The crew immediately made for the shore. This was the right thing to do. If they had run into rapids at that moment, it would have been very dangerous to be in a boat without a commander.

In the end Steve managed to swim to the shore by himself.

Our Last Night by the Lijiang River

The story of "the captain in the water" added greatly to the laughter round the campfire that evening. On each trip the last night by the river is a time for real partying and can sometimes be a bit wild. We always take along what we think should be an adequate supply of beer and wine. But that night it seemed a few more bottles were needed. One

member of our party came from Chile and is a well-known businessman back in his own country.

"Wow, I got it," he cried out happily. He had been looking for fresh supplies of drink in the kitchen tent and was lucky enough to find a bottle of Chinese spirits. Well perhaps not so lucky, for this was some really cheap stuff we'd got a few days previously back at Baoshan stone city. We got it for cooking beef dishes. Before I managed to warn him that it was a 65 percent by volume spirit, he had taken a good drink from the bottle.

As he was getting ready to have another drink, someone else came in and he quickly hid the bottle. Then he pulled up his shirt revealing a rather hirsute belly and proceeded to dance what might have been a traditional Chilean dance.

Watching him we reckoned his inspiration had rather a lot to do with diverting attention away from his bottle. We felt ourselves lucky that we had a bottle of whisky in a backpack. If this had been discovered it would soon have been gone before we could get a sip out of it ourselves.

Our seven-day trip on the river was soon over. Although we travel the same section again and again, the experience is always different for me.

1. The gold washing boat on the Jinshajiang river
2. The grand landscape of Jinshajiang gorge





Cycling along the Xinjiang-Tibet Highway


Roof of the World

Photos & Article by Man Man Kuen

I first visited Tibet in 1998. The best times are on those remote and long roads to Tibet. From then on, I had a vision — to cover all the routes of Tibet. As luck would have it, my dream came true in the year of 2002, this time by bicycle.

About the Writer:

Man Man Kuen is a Hong Kong educationalist. Passionate about travelling in the Mainland, Ms. Man has spent her holidays, long and short, hitting the road to China. She particularly loves remote regions such as Xinjiang, Tibet, Yunnan, Inner Mongolia, and even Mohe, the so-called "North Pole village." She once travelled alone and visited the Oroqen ethnic and Ewenki ethnic minority groups, the two tribes that have the least population among all ethnic groups in China.



The Xinjiang-Tibet Highway

July 2002

On summer vacation, a friend from Guangzhou told me that a group of travellers had planned to cycle to Tibet along the Xinjiang-Tibet Highway. I talked with the sponsor nicknamed Jimao (Cock Feather) and learned that a few of the members in the group had experience travelling Tibet on bicycle. So I decided to have a go. I simply handed in my resignation and started on my journey.

Xinjiang-Tibet Highway

It is suggested that travellers who want to take the Xinjiang-Tibet Highway should go from Lhasa, capital of Tibet Autonomous Region, to Yecheng, the terminus in Xinjiang Uygur Autonomous Region. In this way, they can adapt themselves with the ascending altitude—3,500 m at Lhasa, over 4,000 in Ngari region and 6,800 at Jieshan Col. However, we chose Yecheng as our starting point. Shortly after our departure, we had to surmount at one stretch several mountain cols, one higher than the other. The elevation rises sharply from over 2,000 m at Kashi to 4,300 m. Anyone who cannot adapt would suffer mountain sickness. As our destination is Tibet with Lhasa as our destination, we had to overcome some hardships. As it was October, the season heavy snow usually seals the mountain passes in Ngari region, it is impossible to take the Xinjiang-Tibet route. We tried to traverse the mountain passes before the heavy fall of snow.

Xinjiang-Tibet Highway:

This 2000-km route starts from Yecheng, and ends in Lhaze Village, at the foot of Mt. Everest. The highway snakes across the mountain ranges of Himalayas, Gangdise and Karakorum, at an altitude 4500 m above sea level. This is the only passage in the highland between Xinjiang and the Ngari region of Tibet. It is also the major route linking China with India, Nepal, and Kashmir.

A state highway in name, the Xinjiang-Tibet Highway is actually a remote and lonesome route with sparse traffic. Within several thousand kilometres, it is a rugged earthen road. In some sections, there is no fixed roadbed. We had to ride bumping along the deeply rutted road. The only way to take our bearings is to follow the telephone posts.

Comrades

This time I had a few fellow travellers, four females and eight males from all corners of the country. Half of them have experience in long distance cycling. We met in Urumqi, capital of Xinjiang. Taking a bicycle and other gear including a tent and a sleeping bag, I flew from Hong Kong to Urumqi. As I was the last to arrive, the following day we set off for Kashi, the starting point of our journey.

Lodging in the Open Air

To cut down expenses, we camped outdoors. At the beginning, it was not too chilly outdoors. In daytime, we ate in restaurants and had field rations in the evening. The temperature on the plateau varies greatly between morning and evening. Sometimes we had to make a fire for warmth at night. For the preparation of a warm snack at nighttime, we collected firewood while cycling our way at dusk. We prepared instant noodles or occasionally baked sweet potatoes, providing simple but warm food. Together with Xiao Qiang, I once collected dried cow and sheep dung as fuel, and even climbed into a deserted courtyard to get firewood.

The highest point on the Xinjiang-Tibet Highway: the 6700-m Jieshan Col



Trial 1: Not Acclimatised

The first day cycling along the 200-km asphalt road from Kashi to Yecheng was a relaxed ride. We halted for a rest and food every two hours. In July, the cheapest food in Xinjiang is of course the watermelon. The big knives some group members brought for dealing with packs of wolves on the way were very useful for cutting watermelons.

The next day we came to a desert. Afraid that I would fall behind, I neglected to drink enough water. As a result, I got a severe stomach ache at dusk. Xiao Qiang, who led me all the time, had to thumb a lift for me to ride in a bus and told me to wait for the group at Shache.

When I got up the following day, I began to suffer diarrhea. That evening at Yecheng, I had a fever and was sent to hospital. The doctor diagnosed acute enteritis due to serious dehydration. He treated me with five bottles of glucose. Ah Feng and Xiao Qiang changed the bottles for me in turn throughout the night. The day after that, some group members urged me to give up the rest of the journey. If something happened to me on the way, it would hold up the whole group. I asked Jimao if they would give me up. "We won't so long as you won't," he blurted out. So, I rested at Yecheng for nearly a week. The rest of the group prepared for crossing the mountain while waiting for another group member nicknamed Gentou to join us. We then resumed the journey after my recovery. At the start of the Xinjiang-Tibet Highway, we had a group photo taken. There, a police officer told us that we needed a border pass. We had no alternative but to return to Yecheng. Gentou caught up with us finally and now all the members were present.

Trial 2: Accidents Happen

Accidents were comparatively rare during the ascent because our legs were tired and our speed was slow, but the descent was different. The speed can reach 40-50 km/hr. At Mazha Pass, Zhang Wen, a female

member, hit a rock, tumbled off the bicycle and hurt her thigh. The wound was deep. We waited on the spot for a long time, trying to get a passing car to send her down the mountain, but failed. Finally, the strong-willed Zhang limped slowly down the road escorted by others. Who would have known that I was next? I rode downhill swiftly and very soon left the group behind. I was approaching the foot of the mountain, when suddenly a light tornado swept across the ground. My instinct reaction was to apply the brakes. Unable to keep my balance on the macadam road, I was sent flying off the bicycle together with the water bottle. However, I endured the pain and continued down. At the army station at Mazha, they found that I was only slightly wounded on the skin.

Trial 3: Mountain Sickness

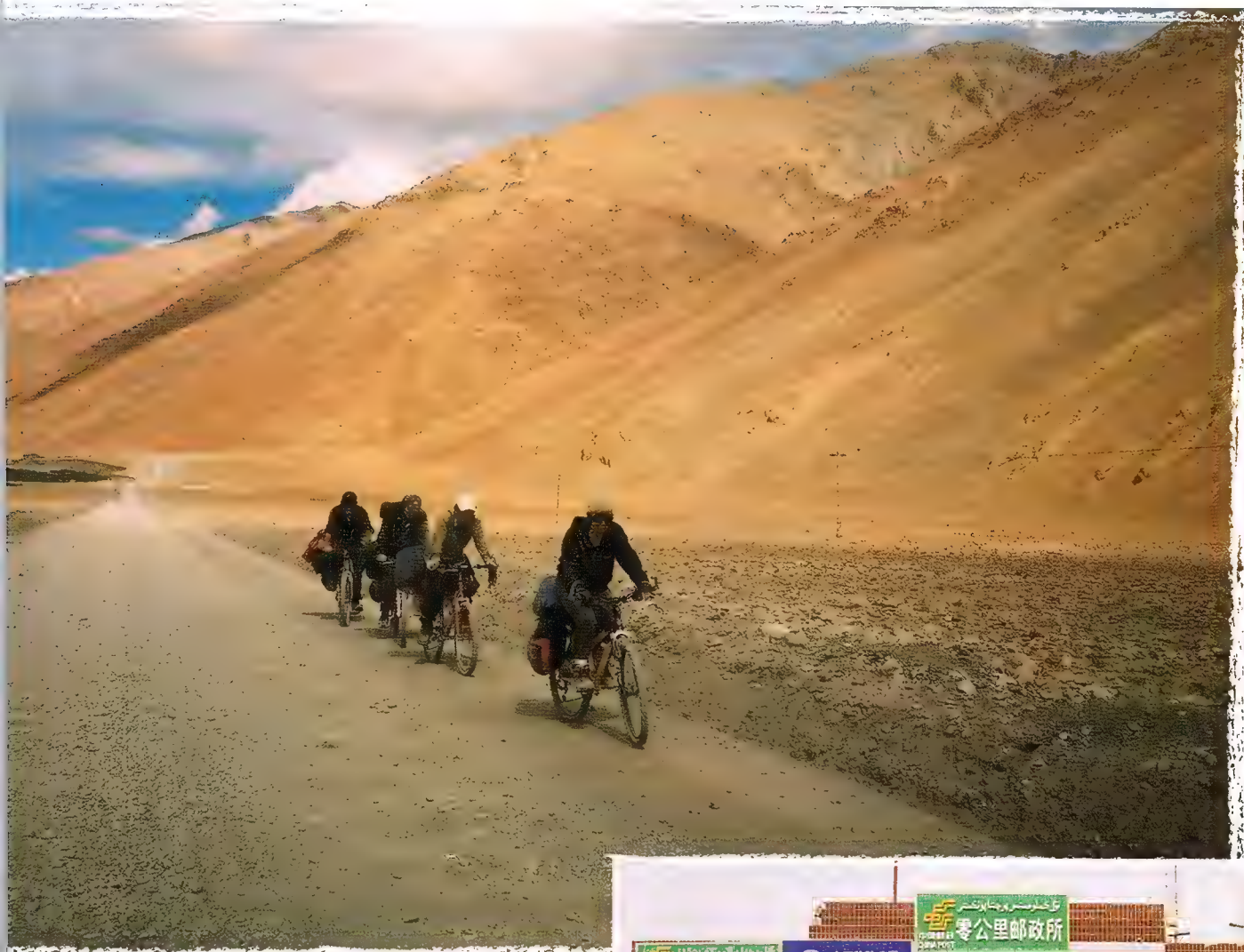
After crossing Mazha Pass, some of the injured or indisposed members proceeded on a bus while six men and I continued to ride. Unpredictably, we encountered another serious trial at Heika, the fourth mountain pass. At four o'clock in the afternoon, I had almost exhausted my strength when the others were far ahead of me. Not to hold up the group, I intended to take a bus to cross the pass. However, Gentou hoped that I would ride up the mountain. It was getting dark. We must seize the time to cross the pass because the place was rather chilly at night, or we might run into packs of wolves.

Having surmounted the mountain pass, I hitched a lift on a truck. All the group members agreed to gather again at Sanshili Barracks. When I saw Gentou again, I found him lying in hospital. He was very weak and had injured his left cheek. It turned out that after I left them, together with Fang Yu, he crossed the pass in a hurry. I assumed that he was on the verge of collapse and fell down shortly after they came to the foot of the mountain. It was already dark, but fortunately, they chanced upon a truck. By the time he reached hospital, he was showing the whites of his eyes. The doctor said his life would be in danger if he were 30 minutes later. He was diagnosed with brain drosy, serious altitude sickness.

Misfortunes struck one after another. Xiao Qiang, who was caring for me all the way, felt unwell after coming down from the Heika Pass. He stayed at Sanshili Barracks for two days, losing his appetite. Tormented by a headache, he vomited badly and, in the end, was sent to hospital. He was diagnosed with altitude sickness. At that, we roared with laughter though we felt bad, having half of the group members confined in hospital.

Trial 4: Parting Company

After a week's rest and recuperation, we packed our bags and got ready to leave for the next leg. Several days later, to my surprise, some of the members decided to



1. Setting up our tents at "No man zone" in the north of Tibet
2. The endless Xinjiang-Tibet Highway
3. Taking a group photo before embarking our Xinjiang-Tibet route in Yecheng city of Xinjiang.





1. Trekking on mountains and rivers are commonplace
2. No. 506 maintenance squad is the place where we bid farewell to our team mates.
3. The forlorn "Dead-man gorge"
4. The three leads of the team: Fang Yu, "Chicken feather" and "Somersault"

leave and continue by truck. I wondered why they were giving up suddenly. They stopped behind us to wait for a truck. No truck appeared for quite a long time, so they had to cycle along while waiting for one.

Twelve of us had now left. By then, a couple had left us in front and Ah Niu and Ah Feng at our rear looking for a truck, had not caught up with us yet. All of a sudden, the remaining key members decided to leave the group. This greatly dampened the morale of the remainder. Fortunately, Xiao Qiang did not want to give up. Both of us were determined to cycle to Lhasa. In addition to Xiao Li, a newcomer who joined us in Xinjiang, we kept on. Before parting company, they exchanged all the useful things and better equipment with us, including Gentou's new bicycle. We bid farewell and said goodbye. Then we packed our bags anew. It was already the middle of the day. The three cyclists accompanied by the shadows of their bicycles gradually faded away from the 509-highway maintenance squad.





Danger Zone 1: Duoma "No Man's Land"

We reached Quanshuigou a few minutes past five in the afternoon. After having a meal, it was nearly dusk. When we heard there were two other companions ahead, we decided to catch up. The road leading to Tianshuihai is very bad, with the first section half-dried muddy road and the rest like a washboard. When the Tianshuihai army station appeared far ahead, the sun at our back was setting behind the mountain. That moment we started a competition: Would the sun submerge behind the mountain first or could we reach the station before sunset? Seeing the sun dropping gradually downward, we pedalled very hard. At last, the game ended in a draw.

We caught up with Zhiyong and Huiling after some time. Now the five of us headed for Duoma, the noted "no-man's land" on the Xinjiang-Tibet route. With an area of over 200 km², the region is the haunt of wolves. Truck drivers warned us that we must camp by the highway, as wolves generally will not come near the road. We chose a hidden sunken place by a hillock as our campsite. There was no sight of wolves that night, nor did we hear their howling.

Danger Zone 2: Dead Man's Gully

The following day we got to Dead Man's Gully. This horrifying name has a story behind it. A company of the Kuomintang army came here one winter. Unable to cope with the harsh climate, the soldiers died one by one. Nevertheless, it is unexpectedly beautiful and the lake is particularly excellent. When golden sunlight glitters on its surface, the lucid water seems completely pure. Remembering that the following day was Xiao Qiang's birthday, we agreed to celebrate the happy occasion in the gully. Some other members who got there on truck also stayed for the celebration. Xiao Qiang asked the boss of the restaurant to prepare a sumptuous dinner. The repeated toasts and warm congratulations had melted the desolation of the Dead Man's Gully.

Danger Zone 3: Jieshan Pass

Dead Man's Gully is by no means an unfounded name. On our arrival, it was fine and the air was fresh and clean. The scenery was beautiful. However, there was a hailstorm the next day, followed by heavy snow throughout the night. The road was exceptionally slippery. Huiling had no choice but to walk up the mountain pushing her bicycle. In the adverse circumstances, we did our best to help each other. Cycling four abreast, we finally reached Jieshan Pass, the highest point on the Xinjiang-Tibet Highway. I was thrilled when Xiao Qiang let me go to the summit first. I pedalled hard to the mountain pass to look for the road sign and then even sought confirmation of the point from the driver of a passing army truck. Here and now, recalling the hardships and setbacks I had gone through, and the cost I had paid for my dream, I was too excited to hold back my tears. Unable to read my reaction, Xiao Qiang thought I was a bit nutty.

The weather became fine when we left Jieshan and the road condition was comparatively good. Somewhere near Duoma we even saw two swans flying over the pasture. Later we met Xiao Li again at Duoma and then came Ah Niu and Ah Feng. The next aim of the seven of us was to eat fish at Bangong Lake. The fish there are bountiful and tasty. Departing from the lake, we moved closer to Shiquanhe, capital of Ngari in Tibet. When the buildings and the altar road came into sight, we felt as if we had not seen them for ages. Our joy was beyond description. There we stayed and ate our fill for over a week.

Sight 1: Divine Mountain and Sacred Lake

Learning that the road leading to the ruins of the Guge Kingdom was very muddy, we left our bicycles in the hostel and hitched a ride on a truck packed with local workers. The Guge Kingdom located in a river valley in Ngari



was a powerful tribal kingdom that dominated the western part of Tibet from the middle of the 10th century to the beginning of the 17th. Now frescoes and statues remain in the ruins surrounded by Zada Earth Forest, comparable to the Arizona Grand Canyon in the United States. Stepping into the earth forest, you would be amazed at the uncanny workmanship of nature. Coincidentally, we spotted two rainbows arching over the earth forest at that very moment. Guge is a place I will certainly revisit.

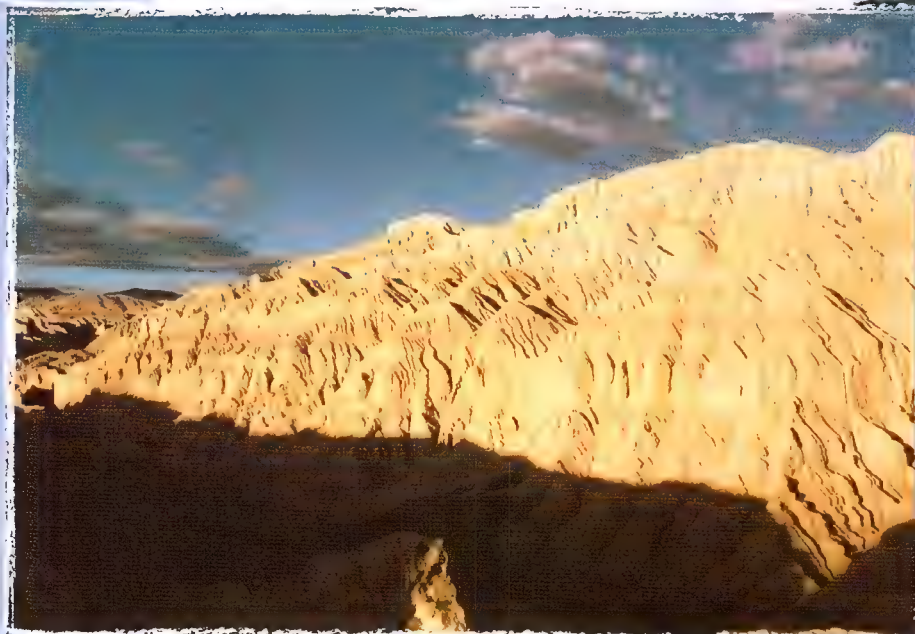
After Guge we returned to Shiquanhe, from where we cycled to the Divine Mountain. It was the Year of the Horse, the birth year of Sakyamuni, the founder of Buddhism. It is believed that in the Year of the Horse, each lap Buddhist followers trek around the mountain is equivalent to 13 years' charitable and pious deeds. That is why there are so many Tibetans or visitors in this year. It was already dark when we got to the foot of the mountain. We groped our way across a river and climbed the mountain to look for a hostel pushing the bicycles along. After a meal of instant noodles, we fell soundly asleep in no time.

The next morning we woke up and found many stalls selling local products at the foot of the Divine Mountain. The place was as busy as a flea market. I bargained with a female stall keeper for a wooden bowl made in Purang while Zhiyong exchanged his long Tibetan knife for an exquisitely made smaller one. There we met a Japanese visitor who had a sunburned nose. He cycled by himself to the site from Xinjiang with a bag of garbage tied to the carrier. He asked me where he could find a garbage can. I told him that he could throw the bag on a pile of garbage and it would be collected some time later. But in the end, he took the bag away with him.

Sight 2: Qomolangma Peak, Yamzho Yumco Lake

Xiao Qiang and I left without going round the mountain, for we wanted to spend the Mid-Autumn Festival on the scenic spot from where one can have a closer view of the magnificent Qomolangma, the world's highest peak. We bought four small moon cakes especially for the festival. On the way to the sacred Mapam Yumco Lake, we saw some rarely seen black-necked cranes. The southern Ngari route is one of the main tourist itineraries in Tibet. Jeeps can be seen at any time. Once we ran out of water and had to force ourselves to ask for water from a passing car. Foreign visitors, curious to see us cycling on this hard route, offered us water enthusiastically. They even gave us Coca-Cola as well as their warm blessings.

Half-way to the mountain, we met Ah Feng and Ah Niu again. The four of us made an appointment to wait for each other at Xigaze and then go together to Yamzho Yumco Lake. It is a painstaking road leading to the Qomolangma Peak. At an altitude of 5,000 m and above,



it is surfaced with broken stones. I met with the same trouble as at Heika Pass. In the afternoon, we rode amidst cold wind blowing from all directions. Pushing the bicycle, I was too fatigued to move on but lay on my back by the roadside. When a jeep passed by I waved casually to the driver. I felt ashamed that I had hitched a lift for the last three kilometres up to the scenic site.

After coming down from the mountain, Xiao Qiang and I returned to Xigaze where we joined Ah Niu and Ah Feng. We rode together to our last destination — the Yamzho Yumco Lake. The day we set off for Lhasa, Xiao Qiang, having a pain in his knees, gave up cycling and took a bus. As for me, I rode all the way and arrived at Lhasa at 21:30.



Thus, I had completed the nearly three-month cycling journey.

When asked about riding a bicycle on the roof of the world, I always think of the journey to the Qomolangma Peak. The Himalayas before my eyes and the surrounding scenery below the horizon have impressed me greatly. I have a strong sense that I move on the surface of the globe and a feel of "the earth is under my feet".

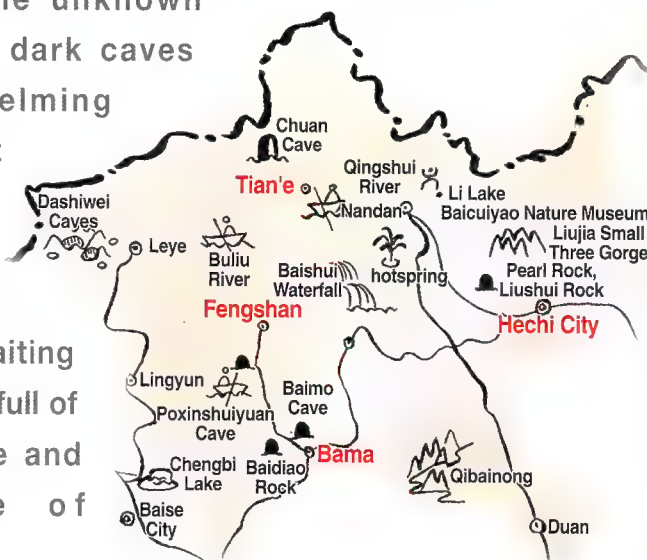
Notes: For more stories about the writer's journey, go to Gentou's web pages at www.cyclist.cn.

1. Lake Mapam Yumco
2. The scenery in Zandatulin is breathtaking.
3. The highest point of the Xinjiang-Tibet highway: Jieshan Col
4. Galloping to the base camp of Mt. Everest

Exploring the Depths

Photos by Nina Tan & Zhang Yu Article by Nina Tan & Tian Zhiheng
Map by Tian Zhiheng

Exploring the unknown world in totally dark caves entails overwhelming dread for most people. Yet to cave-explorers, the caves are a treasure trove waiting to be discovered, full of wonder, surprise and the promise of achievement.



About the Writer:

Ms. Nina Tan is a native of Guangxi Zhuang Autonomous Region. Since 2000, she began partaking in cave expeditions. Later, she established the Red Forest Club, Outdoor Activity Forum, and stores selling outdoor gears.

Day1: Crews

Last February, I joined the 17th Chinese-British Joint Cave Exploration. We met with Zhang Yuanhai from the Chinese Cave Research Society (senior researcher at the Karst Research Institute of the Chinese Academy of Geological Sciences) and six team members from the BCRA at the Tian'e County Town of Hechi City in Guangxi.

Day2: Ready to Go

Early in the morning, we inspected the potholes and some cave entrances. Looking at an ancient riverbed and a contemporary riverbed 500 m apart in elevation, team leader Ged exclaimed, "If the potholes or caves here were connected with the riverbeds, that would be exciting!" If that is the case, it means the most ancient riverbed will be connected with the highest stratum of caves, which then will be connected with the modern riverbed through a 500-m high cave tunnel! Exploring such a network of caves would be fascinating.

Day3: Setting off in the Rain

The most feared factor in exploring caves with subterranean rivers is rain. I remembered that in an exploration made in 1997, the subterranean river washed away a team member. It was not until two years later that part of his body was found at the lower reaches of the same subterranean river.

Luckily the rain was not too heavy and none of the observation stations reported a higher water level. We stuck to our original plan, but were careful about changes in water currents, and planned to stay away from the river as much as possible, and keep a distance in elevation from the subterranean water level.

That day we began to investigate the caves around the Tian'e County Town. Before this, I had only explored some cliff face caves exposed to the sun and some shallow caves. So this exploration was also a learning experience for me.

The first group went into the cave to explore the route. The basic information they provided paved the way for the surveying group. Not far from the entrance, the cave began to branch off. We took the one that led us directly to

the subterranean river. Then we went up against the current, trying to find an exit. But the tunnel was either blocked by dirt or water, or became a slot too small to pass. Although we didn't find any exit, we saw many stalactites, stalagmites, stone pillars and flowstone banks in different shapes.

Day4: Discovery of a Pothole

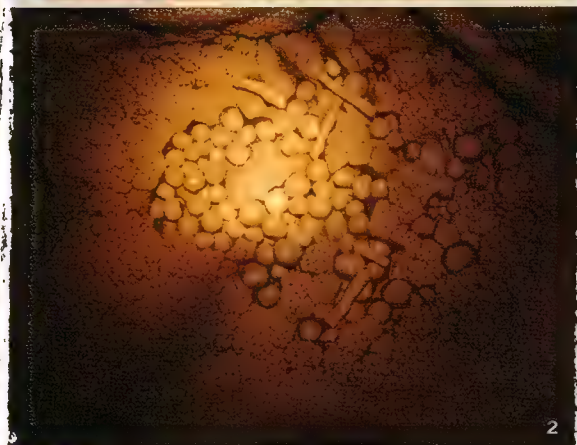
The rain stopped, but it was still cloudy. We continued to survey the cave, breaking into two groups, each going from an entrance and heading toward the heart of the cave. I was put into the surveying group.

The survey work is quite simple. The total length of the cave is the measure of the major cave tunnel plus the lengths of all the branch caves. So during the survey, we must be careful of every small aperture lest we miss anything and end up with inaccurate data.

At 4 p.m., our team met in a big hall of flow stone banks. By then the measuring of the major cave channel was completed. There were still some branch caves that needed special equipment to measure. So we had to leave them for cave divers to explore.

1. This is an enormous cave, where the team members dangled down to the bottom on ropes dozens of metres long. In the darkness, they could barely see the dim lights.
2. It is a real challenge to explore a cave with moving water. People have to be well equipped.





About China's Caves

A cave, according to the definition given by IUS (International Union of Speleology), refers to the naturally formed underground space accessible to humans.

Distribution: Such caves in China are mostly found in Guangxi Zhuang Autonomous Region, as well as Guizhou, Yunnan and Sichuan provinces in the south, where there is a wide distribution of karst topography with high mountains and low valleys. Caves are shaped mostly by running water. Only a few came into being after an abruption of the earth's crust, eruption of volcanoes, or marine abrasion.

According to preliminary statistics, so far over 400 karst caves have been surveyed with a length of more than 500 m in China. By May 2002, China had 108 caves measured to be over 3,000 m long among which, the largest cave system — that of the Bailang subterranean river at Leye in Guangxi — boasts a total measured length of 75 km.

The pioneer group came back today with exciting news — a bigger karst cave was found at Bala Township where there is a very spacious cave hall and a deep pothole! We would go there the next day.

Day5: Down To the Heart of the Earth

The sky cleared up finally, and the temperature rose to 15-24 °C. On our way to Bala Township, we found a pothole entrance hidden amid some wild grass and trees. Besides a “Ω” symbol on the county map, we didn't have any information about it. So we took some ropes, hoping to discover more about the cave.

I later called this cave "staircase mining channel". Right from the entrance, there is an almost 10-m-deep pothole with straight walls as steep as about 80°. At the bottom of the pothole was a rectangular flat terrace. We anchored, fixed our ropes, and climbed down. Standing beside the terrace, we found another pothole, almost the same as the first one. So our ropes were anchored and fixed and we climbed down again. We found yet another pothole as we

went further into the cave.

Looking downward, I saw a dark slot about one metre wide. I searched with my light but could see nothing — it's another pothole! So every pothole ends on a terrace, which again is connected with another pothole. We seemed to be walking in a channel leading to the centre of the earth!

I couldn't remember how many rope anchors we had set before we came to a place where the terrace was replaced by a puddle held up by narrow stone walls. At the other end, there was another pothole. After we reached the bottom of this 30-m-deep pothole, our 200-m rope was used up. As we passed through a slot, we saw exactly the same sight — a pothole. I was appalled. It was 3 p.m. Looking at the entrance of the pothole, the red flame of the acetylene lamp was a comfort, for it marked the only

1. The Sino-Anglo cave exploration team
2. Eccentric pearls of limestone
3. The entrance to the underground tunnel
4. Limestone being illegally extracted
5. "One Thread Sky" is true to its name
6. The team resting at the "skylight" of the underground tunnel





passage back to the human world.

Without ropes we couldn't go any further. So we had to return one by one. To save electricity, we turned off the main lamp when waiting for the rope, and only kept one of our head lights on. In the narrow shaft, we could only hear each other's breathing.

Our body heat gradually dissipated with the evaporation of water from our clothes, and we were fighting hard with the cold. The thermometer showed 15 °C and 83% humidity. The icy socks wrapped my swelling feet in boots that were full of mud and water. I took them off, and my bare feet looked like pickled vegetables. I had to wring my socks dry, and it wasn't until instructions came through the intercom that I had the heart to put the socks back on.

Guide For Cave Explorers

Preparation: Since there is always danger involved in cave exploration, it is necessary to make a plan, set a route before entering the caves, and hand it in to the local government or rescue organisation. Before exploration, it is also necessary to have some basic information of the destination, such as the hydrography, climate, topography, geology, cultural and social customs, and traffic. There should be at least two, better three, members in the group. A checklist of equipment and supplies should be made, along with a rescue plan.

Outfit: Cave exploration gear is of two types: personal outfit and special equipment.

Personal outfit: the indispensable means of lighting and protection, such as smock, crash helmet, head lamp, gloves, kneepads, cuffs, and elbow pads.

Special equipment: the necessary technical means of exploration that vary with different cave types and their specific conditions.

Presently, the single rope technique (SRT) popular around the world is very practical and effective for pothole or vertical cave exploration. The commonly used nylon rope is 8 to 10 mm in diameter, also called static rope.





On our way back, we began surveying again. Although we had been very careful, we still couldn't avoid knocking or bumping into the rocks. I felt that my hands and feet must have looked like eggplants — purple and swollen. On the return trip, we found fossils from time to time in the walls. It seemed that this cave is really something that deserves further study.

A 20-Day Cave Tour

In the following busy surveying work, we covered caves and some small natural pits in the neighbouring counties. We found that the large karst cave groups in Tian'e and Fengshan are not only high in density (with more caves formed in a unit of area), but also have a wealth of beautifully shaped secondary sediment. Most importantly, the large karst cave group in Fengshan is world class in terms of dimension.

It is believed that the Jiangzhou underground corridor and the Poxin underground river system are part of the same system. The Poxin underground cave is 10 km longer than the 13 km measured in the 1989 survey, so the total length of the whole system may be almost 40 km. This cave system is spacious and level inside, with most tunnels no less than 50 m in height and width. It is very likely the longest cave in Guangxi Zhuang Autonomous Region.

Travel Tips

Tian'e County is 157 km away from Hechi City in Guangxi. There is a highway from Guilin City to Hechi, covering 337 km. The provincial capital Nanning, 416 km from Hechi, is also connected with Hechi by an express way.

Accommodation: There is only one three-star hotel in Hechi, priced rather high but the guest can bargain. It is normally more practical to stay at the county government's guesthouse which has simple facilities with air-conditioning and TV set, priced from 40 to 120 yuan a day.

1. Most caves in China cluster in regions with Karst landscape, such as Guangxi.
2. Team members are taking pictures of the bats in the cave.
3. When exploring the cave vertically, we have to know the basic knotting skills.
4. Getting prepared before entering the cave
5. Geological research in the underground "lobby"

Life and Death

Photo & Article by Hu Hailong

in Motuo

I arrived at Bomi by myself last September. I met another solitary backpacker, Old Guang. We agreed to travel together to Motuo. We drove into the indigenous forest launching our life and death journey to Motuo.

Writer's Travel Route





Motuo is the remotest county in the southeast of Tibet. Due to its high altitude and abyssal valleys, Motuo is highly inaccessible. More, every year, from December to June of the next year, the mountains in the region will be covered by snow and closed to visitors. All these make Motuo the only county in the whole nation unreachable by car, and a place full of mysteries.

The truck we boarded meandered between heaven and earth in the quietest manner. The headlights of the car beamed down on the snaking road ahead. At first, I thought it was just an ordinary road narrower than the Sichuan-Tibet highway. The path, in fact, is more than that! Apart from the impression left from the tires of vehicles, there was no indication of any sort that it was indeed a "road". Loosen rocks, fallen cliffs, slumping grounds were found everywhere. The "road" itself was extremely winding and only had room for one car to pass. There was no place for any vehicle to pull away for many kilometres ahead. If another vehicle ever came from the opposite direction, heavens know which one should roll down from the cliffs first.

Bomi 80K: **A Lucky Escape from Death**

We left from Bomi. After less than 10 km, three cars came to a halt. We asked the driver in what was wrong. "Waiting for the cars behind,"

Getting to Motuo

1. Bayi route: Start on Bayi on the Sichuan-Tibetan highway, and drive to the canyon of Yarlung Zangbo River. At Paixiang, near the entrance of the canyon, drive up Mt. Duoxiongla. Passing Beibeng, you will get to Motuo in 4 to 5 days.

2. Bomi route: Start on Bomi and climb up Mt. Galongla. Drive past 80K, 108K and 113K to reach Motuo. The journey takes about 3 to 4 days.

Travelling seasons:

Both traditional routes to Motuo need to cross snow-capped mountains, either Mt. Duoxiongla or Mt. Galongla. Both situating in high altitude, entering the mountains is restricted for more than half a year. Generally speaking, the snow-covered seasons are from December to June of the next year. Yet, July and August are both the rockslide and mudslide-prone rainy months — not the best time for visit. September and October are the golden season. Motuo is also in a low altitudinal zone, with high temperature and tropical climate. Summer outfit should be prepared before hitting the road.

Entrance pass to Motuo: Entrance pass to Motuo has to be ready before embarking your journey. You could apply for it at the police bureau in Bayi Township. When planning your trip, don't forget to finish your visit in Motuo before the pass expires. In our trip, we got a 1-month pass which cost only 20 yuan.

About the Writer:

Mr. Hu Hailong is a Sichuanese. After graduated from high school in 1992, he visited Shennongjia in Hubei Province — which embarked his passion for

nature exploration and camping. He has been to Yunnan, Guizhou, Sichuan provinces and some most remote no-man regions. He started backpacking in Tibet in 2003.



1. The road to Motuo on a Chinese-manufactured truck, Dongfeng, is perilous and risky, yet compensated by soul-stirring sceneries. (by Anita Yeung)

2. In the dim and humid indigenous forest, leeches are the greatest enemies to travellers. (by Anita Yeung)

Travel Tips

Trucks: Two routes take the cars to 80K from Kunming. They usually depart at 3 a.m. If you are sitting in the driving compartment, it will cost about 50 yuan; if at the back, 20 yuan. After reaching 80K, there is no driveway and you have to trek the remaining 66 km.

Porters: At the starting points of both routes, in 80K and Paixiang, you could hire porters, and the cost depends on the weight of your belongings. Whichever route you take, it demands much physical strength, since the roads are perilous. It is desirable to have experienced porters, especially those of Menba and Lushan ethnic minorities, who know the roads well to trek along.

he said. While waiting, he told us nobody lived in the next 100 miles, just wolves, bears and tigers. Rumors had it that savages had appeared on the route in recent years.

When the other cars had arrived, all the six Dongfeng vehicles carried on altogether. In no time, we reached 24K. As the winter snow would arrive soon, trucks packed with goods were running against time to bring winter supplies to Motuo.

Day broke and the first glimpse brought me to a silver snow-capped mountain. When one car broke down, the whole crew stopped. We got out to see the boundless forest in the midst of morning beams. Under our feet was extensive grassland with crystal-clear streams snaking through. Enormous glaciers, touching the mouth of the river valley, formed the

cradle of the streams. Meanwhile, the sunlight from the east passed through the clouds, shining right at the apex of the snow mountain. "Mt. Galongla!" someone shouted. I turned around and saw this gigantic snow mountain emerge from the clouds gradually, beautiful beyond description.

The roads got narrower and cliffs deeper. Each time the car turned abruptly, it seemed on the verge of plunging into a bottomless abyss: an illusion created by steep cliffs. Right hand glued to the handle, left hand cemented to the seat, I secretly unlocked the safety lock of the car door, thinking if anything were wrong, I would jump! How could you call this a road? This is, doubtless, the worst road in China, if not the entire world.

Our car suddenly slid down at full speed. Our driver immediately slammed on the brake, but it was too late. The steep slope made it impossible to stop. He tried putting on the handbrake but to no avail: the car kept sliding down towards a cliff! Old Guang cried out, "We are finished!" In a rush, I pushed open the door, but we could not jump because there was only a 10-cm space between the door and the wall. Mind blank and eyes closed, I awaited my impending death.

The car abruptly stopped at the very edge of the cliff. During this narrow escape, we were thrown into disarray. Frenetically, we pushed our way out. At that moment, I regretted sitting on the right of the car, not the middle, making me the last one to get out. The car stayed where it was, without moving an inch. We went back to take a look — a big rock at the rim of the cliff stopped the car from diving off. The left rear tire, on the other hand, was hanging in mid air. Truly we had escaped death! Although our luggage was still in the car, no one dared to get it.

All the other drivers came over, faces pale. They exchanged conversations in Menba dialect, and then began to take action. Some levelled; some lifted; some carried. At long last, our driver boldly got in the car. Though his facial muscles were twitching, he restarted the engine, changed gears and pressed the gas-pedal. Gasping for its dying breath, the car fanatically huffed and puffed. Finally, accompanied by shattered rocks and flying sand, the car broke through and dashed 30 m forwards before it halted. Old Guang and I swarmed into the car again, and continued as if nothing had happened. Our cars carried on until reaching the entrance to Mt. Galongla.





The driver told us we were lucky to have a sunny day after two months of rain. There I saw the real Mt. Galongla.

52K to 80K: Average Speed of 3 km/hr

We kept winding down till we saw a few shanty houses where we lunched. I looked at my watch — 11:30a.m. A 52-km ride had taken us seven and a half hours!

After lunch, we went down the slope, and entered an immense indigenous forest. Huge pine trees occupied every corner. Clear water springs flowed out of the woods — turning some roads into rivers. Further down, a mixed deciduous and coniferous forest came into view followed by a heavily shaded coniferous forest. The roads become rough: rocks and pits were everywhere.

On the way, we crossed some rapid streams. In places with deeper water, we had to chop down trees to make a simple "bridge" for the car to roll across. The nerve and skills of the drivers never failed to surprise me.

At 8:30 p.m., we arrived at 80K. The 28-km ride from 52K took us eight and a half hours. The average speed: 3 km/hr. The total distance of today's ride was 80 km, which took us 16-and-a-half hours, less than 5 km/hr.

80K was very filthy: the simple shanty houses were

surrounded by ankle-deep dirt. We stayed in a filthy room, but we were too exhausted to care.

80K to 108K: Almost Every Horse Bleeding from the Eyes

The "road" from 80K, no longer existed. From then on, we had to walk. A path that took most people three days, we decided to finish in two. We woke up at 8:30 p.m. and began to look for porters. However, most porters had already left with their supplies. We should not have slept in! We contacted a Luoba young man called Dengzhuo, who would go to Motuo. We agreed to pay 200 yuan him to carry our belongings to Motuo. At 10:30 p.m. we finally departed.

When we started, we heard that leeches weren't too much of a problem, so we didn't put on the uncomfortable leggings in the hot climate. After travelling about 200 m, a caravan came out of the forest. Almost every single horse was bleeding in the eyes and blood-covered. It was horrifying. We asked the leader of the caravan what was

1. Crossing landslide and trekking in water are two major challenges in the hike to Motuo. (by Anita Yeung)
2. When trekking along the river banks of rapid currents, one is most afraid of running into any landslide. (by Hu Hailong)

wrong. He said, "Leeches." We went for a closer look: indeed, fat leeches were crawling near the eyes of the horses. Taken by great surprise, we never thought the small leeches could suck up so much blood. We instantly tied the bandages around our legs.

Old Guang and I, in the beginning were like promenading in a park-sightseeing here and taking pictures there. After trekking for one kilometre, we realised it was no longer so easy and fun anymore. All the roads ahead were basically dirt. We struggled through the mud for 500 m, and thereafter we trekked on streams. Hopping here and there, we moved on. Our eyes got busier — trying to find the right spot for our feet. Dizzy, we trekked our way through.

Turning around, we noticed Dengzhuo walking in the water. Being so used to the road, he did not bother to look for anywhere to place his feet. Another kilometre had us almost out of breath. We questioned if we could make it to Motuo; we had to stop thinking too much. Eyes closed and chest raised, we walked in big strides. It actually made the moving so much easier,

despite our shoes floating like boats.

Up ahead, Old Guang was the first one shrieking, "Leeches!" The disgusting critter crawled up Guang's arm — making one want to vomit. Without hesitation, I snapped at it with my fingers and after a few times managed to fling it away. Shortly, another one crept onto my hand. This time I learnt a new trick: using a cigarette butt to burn it. It worked tremendously well. Once burnt by the cigarette, the leeches would coil backwards and fall off right away.

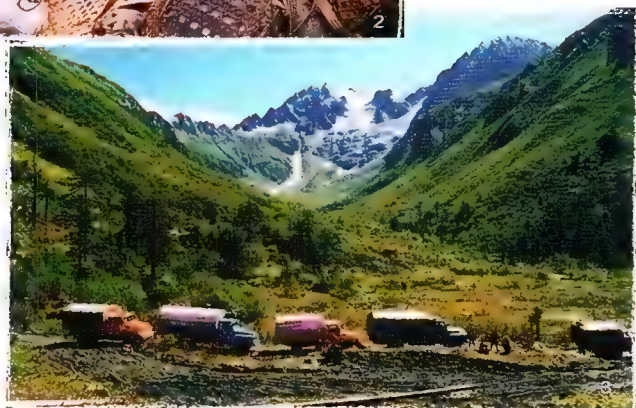
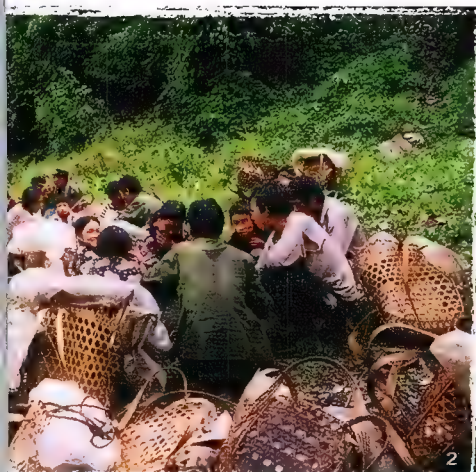
The roads got worse as time went by. Gradually, we lost the excitement of taking photos, but struggled through. Suddenly a big slump appeared in front, almost 50 m long. This collapsed area tumbled all the way to the river for 200 m. The slope was very sheer, and fallen rocks and sand were everywhere. A glance down the slope brought us to a roaring river. Any careless step down the slope may plunge one to the river, and death. I stood like a stone there. Dengzhuo, however, began to pass the slump. He bounced around the cliff like a monkey and in a split second he was on the other side. Old Guang and I



exchanged some bewildered looks — negotiating who would go first. It turned out that I went first, being younger. Like a lizard, I held tightly to the wall of the slope and carefully inched forward. I dared not to look underneath. The few minutes on that 50-m path seemed like centuries. I passed safety, and there were no falling rocks on the way.

Next came Old Guang. He was clumsier, with his back on the slope, hands held up, feet rooted on the ground and bum touching the wall. He was basically creeping. Yet, it

was worse because he was staring at the raging river. Fortunately, he made it to the end safely as well. When we were to start again, Old Guang asked us to wait — for his legs were shaking like jello.



Our Feet Swollen Like Two Buns

Shortly after, another waterfall emerged under our feet. A suspension wooden bridge was hanged on top of the waterfall — with a width of not more than 30 cm. We bit our lips and ran through it.

At 7 p.m., we made it to 108K. The wooden guesthouses here not only offered a shared compound, but two single rooms. Old Guang and I took one each. The so-called single room was nothing more than a filthy and dark bed. The soaked shoes and pants were a pain in the neck indeed. Immediately we took off our shoes and chuckled, "They are not shoes at all, but mud coated on our feet." We could hardly recognise the socks. With socks taken off, we were astounded to look at our deformed feet. They were so swollen and pale. Our soles were completely blanched, and skin was peeling off.

At night, some Sichuan and Menba workers came to relax. One taught us how to cross slump areas. "Listen first

and then look. When you hear rolling rocks, stop crossing," he advised. Another cut in and said, "Weather like this is still okay. But if it rains, the slope is very unstable, and the slumping ground is too dangerous." I tried dumping all the advice into my mind. Later, we discussed the poisoning ritual of Menba women. It is said that some women, even now, keep this "murdering" ritual. They put poison in wine or tea to kill you, believing that once you're dead, your blessings will be passed to her next life. From 80K to 108K, all we ate was dried food. Though our stomach was often upset, we felt safe.

At 3 a.m, thunder rocked the whole valley. I woke up from my dream. Soon after, a storm howled for two hours. It looked like the river was to flood and that made me worry about the trip the day after.

180K to Motuo County: Mud Slides and Rocks

The next morning, the rain had stopped. Old Guang worried that he would drag the team back, so he had left earlier. I followed quietly from behind. Dengzhuo left half an hour later, and agreed to meet us after 5 km at 113K. The scenery on the way was breathtaking. The morning mist rose gently from the river in the valley, and enveloped the woods on both sides. It was a typical tropical rain forest view. At 113K, Yarlung Zangbo River came into view. The river was vast and flowing rapidly.

We walked and walked, and before reaching the river, I found another vast slump. It was more than 300 m wide and a couple of hundred metres high. Fallen rocks kept dropping into the raging Yarlung Zangbo River.

It was still raining, so the slope and soil were very slippery. The slope was steep and I could barely place my feet. Everywhere were rocks the size of a water buffalo, or even a house. I took a deep breath and after a few steps I stopped and looked up to see if there were any falling rocks. On the way, my heart raced and mind went blank. There was only one voice within: move forward! Move forward! Move forward! Sweating, I was standing in between two slumping areas. The relatively safe area between the two slumps was only 10 m wide. We could not stay for too long because it could be the most dangerous site — the place might collapse anytime! Run! I hardly had any time to think, but to move ahead. A rock under foot kept slipping down, and countless more coming from above. I was not sure if any falling rock might crush me to death. Thus, I made up my mind — run! Run! Run! This idea was simpler than before. I ran all the way to the end of the slump.

1. Trekking on the dangerous and gruesome road takes away any joy for sightseeing. (by Anita Yeung)
2. Porters carry all sorts of supplies to Motuo. Sometimes they make extra money for being tourist guides. (by Anita Yeung)
3. Starting from 52K, it takes the truck eight and a half hours to cover a distance of 28 km. (by Hu Hailong)

Finally I thought I could rest a little, only to find that I had landed in a more perilous place. Another more extensive slump was in front of us. We had passed two and there were two more ahead. I was indeed at the core of a super slump — the most life-threatening area. Bullets of sweat dropped, and my jacket was soaking wet. We had to go! I once again scrambled over the jumbled rocks. To my surprise, I was bouncing with apelike agility.

Out of the blue, I heard a strange sound. Lifting my head, I saw some loosened rocks due to heavy rain. Streams of mudflow, with rocks inside, were slipping down quickly. Then a big rock, the size of a grinding wheel, together with some small rocks, began to fall down. My instinct told me to squat against the wall. The big rock flew right across, almost hitting my head, and plunged into the river. Smaller rocks rolled in front of me. Some hit my body. My survival instinct prompted me to madly scamper across.

A Nerve-Wracking Climb

Having tottered the three sections, we entered the fourth section without rest. We gave an all-out effort to finish the whole trek. I looked ahead and found myself on the wrong path. With my eyes fixed on my feet, I had trotted down to the river. What should I do? I wasted no time thinking but climbed. Every step tipped over an avalanche of rocks. At long last, in a semi-rolling and climbing fashion, I came back to path. Then,



a turbulent current cut right across our path and flew over a cliff creating a waterfall. Worse still, there was no suspension bridge! Run again! After entering the stream, I realised that the rainstorm the previous night had raised the water level a great deal. The thigh-high water wobbled my whole body back and forth. Fortunately, the river narrowed and I jumped with my remaining strength. There I fastened myself to a big rock. Struggling a little, I managed to tremble my way up, wringing-wet. I collapsed on a rock and rested. Risks came one after another like a series of rainstorms. My strong determination was on the verge of dismantling.

The path afterwards was in a well-shaded forest. Though free from apparent dangers, the path was still awful. Decayed leaves and branches, over years, had formed a thick layer of decomposition matter. Foul dark water squashed up when you stepped on it. The forest was permeated with a rotten odour and clay sucked your feet in everywhere. I noticed four bloodthirsty leeches on my left calf. No wonder all the bandages were blood-soaked.

The forest was incredibly tranquil and grim. I was frightened. In a place much patronised by large carnivores, I worried about attack. I took out the knife fastened to my waist, and held it tight. Eventually, I caught up with Dengzhuo, who told me about a resting place nearby and suggested we wait for Old Guang there. Later, we were at a nearly right-angled cliff: apparently, we were at a dead end. While I was still wavering, Dengzhuo and another porter had already climbed up three metres and to the other side of the cliff. We had to climb. With no return, I



went ahead. Crawling up was not that bad; yet, going to the other side — where Yarlung Zangbo River was right under my eyes — was absolutely terrifying. There was a split second I thought I would just slide down.

After descending the cliff, I took half a day to calm down, though still feeling dreadful. We sat and waited for Old Guang. Hungry as I was, when Dengzhuo handed me cake and drink, I politely declined as the poisoning ritual from the Menba was still in the back of my mind. As Dengzhuo gobbled his food and slurped his drink down, I gazed at him, mouth watering continuously.

After 40 minutes Old Guang was nowhere to be seen. I immediately asked Dengzhuo to look for him. Our eyes searched the river: thinking if Old Guang had an accident, his body would flow into the main course of River Ya.

Finally, Old Guang, led by Dengzhuo, appeared.

Old Guang did not stop complaining — the road was too dangerous. His legs were nearly immobile. A few falls hurt him badly and traumatised him to death. Complaints voiced out, he sat his bum into the dirt. We had survived — a fact to be grateful for.

Gliding over the Dirt — All the Way down the Cliff

At noon, we came to Miri Village — the notorious "Poisoning village". We were too scared to buy any drinks, we just hunkered down under the eaves of a storeroom, totally quiet. Nobody moved an inch for we were just exhausted. No one wanted to be the first to get up.

Old Guang really could not move. Dengzhuo assured us that the road ahead was not risky, and let us go first.

With a torch, Old Guang could take his time and catch up with me slowly. The sun came out an hour later, and the scorching heat made us dizzy. My body was agonised, short of breath and legs heavy as stone. I waved and asked the others to go first. The team, once again, was split into three parts, me in the centre.

1. Menba women in Motuo (by Anita Yeung)

2. There are occasionally smooth paths as well. (by Anita Yeung)

3. From 80K to Motuo, there are only desolate wooden houses for accommodation. (by Anita Yeung)

Travel Tips

Essentials: Sleeping bag, raincoat, water-proof shirts and pants, and air-permeable underwear; long army boots (water-proof hiking boots are inconvenient because once water gets in, it can't be drained); elastic bandages; sun block; first mirror; Swiss army knife; threads & needles; headlight; lighter; medication for combating flu, cold and diarrhoea; ointment for treating snake and insect bites as well as twisted angles and bruises. Maps, maps, compass, dried and high-calorie foodstuff and water (but clear spring water is available along the path).

Accommodation and Food: On the way to Motuo, you could replenish your food supplies in Bonu or 80K. Accommodations are available in 80K, 100K, 106K, 110K and Miri village, but in poor conditions. Lodgings are inexpensive, but food is very expensive. From Pailiang to Mt. Duoxiangba, you could find accommodations in Laga, Hahai, and Solberg. Conditions are not much different from that on the local route.

Another hour flew by amidst painful steps. Totally run-down, I could hardly bear the excruciating pain from the blisters of my feet. I trotter to a small slump, and half way through, I got my foot stuck up to the ankle. Terrified, I tried to pull but it did not work. I tried again but to no avail.

Meanwhile, the other leg began to sink to the calf. Slowly, I sunk further, while my whole body slid along the slope. A quick peep sideways showed that I was only three metres from a huge cliff. I had no idea what to do. Out of nowhere, a woman squealed, "Don't stay there, run, run!" I was awakened by the shout and then after a shout, I pulled my legs and ran with mighty strength. It was no simple task to stumble across and reach the other side. My negligence almost cost my life.

A Storm Hits

The bluish cloudless sky became suddenly overcast. The tropical climate was highly changeable. We estimated it would take another three hours to get to Motuo. If we kept moving, we should be able to avoid the rain. It was too simple a plan. In about 10 minutes, dark clouds amassed from all four corners. The sky was completely blanketed, followed by a stroke of lightening. A thunderstorm poured down rain.

The heavy downpour made it difficult even to open my eyes. There was no choice, however, but to proceed. I later met a Menba man, and we went together. He used a small knife to cut two banana leaves for umbrellas. With great enthusiasm, he handed one to me — and now I could see clearly, at least, a few steps ahead. Shoulder by shoulder, we shielded ourselves with the banana-leaves-turned umbrellas. Any pain was soon drowned out by the perky young man. We became friends soon and chuckled all the way. Rain stopped and we made our way through a swampy depression. Suddenly we were taken aback by some strange snapping sound, and we both halted. The sound came from the upper left area of the wood. Immediately, trees started falling on both sides. A buffalo-size rock rolled past, six metres in front of us. Had we not stopped on time, we could have been crushed under it.

Trepidation was real; yet we had to move on. A vague glimpse of houses ahead. My Menba friend told me it was Motuo. Indescribable relief rose up.

It was then I felt the pain in my swollen legs and blistered feet. I could go no further, and waved goodbye to my friend.

After resting a minute or so, I bit my lip and moved forward. Now, even the backs of my feet were swollen. Every step felt like cracking. I swallowed the agony for another hour — and I saw Motuo again. To my dismay, Motuo was still far ahead, as if I had not moved at all in an hour.

At snail pace, I dragged for another hour towards

Motuo. There I encountered a suspension bridge — cutting the path in two. As I had been trekking by River Ya for hours, I took the right one, the one next to the river. The path was very tilted. Toiling with a dead-tired and starving body, I was about to collapse. I struggled for one kilometre only to find that it was a dead end! I was about to faint. Then I laid on the swampy grass. The whole world seemed to have stopped. Again, I crept back. At the cross section, I met Old Guang stumbling towards me with a stick. I waved him back right away. Drained completely, he did not even say hello. I sighed and turned left. Following him, I got closer to the town. With night falling, we saw a little slope amid drizzle. Passing it with great hope, we discovered another slope ahead. All the way, we dragged and rested — like two snails creeping with pain.

The Painful Journey Ends

At last, in darkness, I arrived at Motuo, shortly before Old Guang. My mind went blank and legs numb. My "corpse" collapsed right in the middle of the road. Old Guang came to take a look and I asked him to go first. Twenty minutes later, I turned on my torch and crawled towards a vending machine and bought FOUR cans of Pepsi! In one slurp I drank them all and felt a little better. A Menba woman from a tuck shop pointed me to the county guesthouse, up the slope, on the right. Only a few minutes, she said. That to me was a marathon: it took me 40





minutes to finish that 300 m.

Inside the guesthouse sat Old Guang gulping down drinks.

Worse, there was a black-out. Old Guang and I sat there for an hour and did not see anyone. It was after 10 at night with a heavy downpour outside. We were cold and hungry.

At length, someone came to serve us. Due to a meeting in the county, the steward said, the guesthouse was full and there were only two beds left in the staff room. In that situation, what else could we do?

Dinner arrived at mid-night. We wolfed down a bowl of noodles and a can of stewed pork. All the resentment and torment of the day dispersed with the food. Not a drop was left. Jaws dropped, the cook just stared at us. We had made it to Motuo.

Paradise Lost

We slept right till the sun was up. All the hardships were gone. My feet were sore and my pants were wet.

The rain had stopped. On the street I saw the real Motuo. Aside from the county government bureau, all the houses were made of wood. The town was tiny, the size of a village. All the roads were mud and dirt. The only sealed road was near the county guesthouse — not longer than 100 m. No wonder people said it was the most expensive place to live: everything was carried in by hard labor. Cement, I learnt, cost 7 to 8 yuan a catty, almost the price of pork in Guangzhou.

The valley is surrounded by mountains encircled by clouds. The astonishing mist forms a mysterious world. Motuo is only a couple of hundred metres above sea level, making it incredibly hot.

At last, I sat back and relaxed in the warm sunbeams coming through the forest.

1. The breath-taking scenery in Motuo. (by Hu Hailong)

2. On the way, all you encounter are rotten and muddy road, wooden houses and every now and then, a few puppies. (by Anita Yeung)





Photos & Article by Xie Guanghui

A Pilgrimage To Meili Snow Mountains

Every time I go to Tibet, I always meet some pilgrims travelling on foot. They go bravely forward to the sacred mountains without any thought of turning back while constantly turning the prayer wheels and chanting the six-word incantation "an ma ni ba mi hong." This time it was the major pilgrimage to the snow-covered Meili Mountains for the Year of Water Sheep, appearing once every sixty years in the Tibetan calendar. I decided to join the trip.

A Pilgrimage to Meili Snow Mountains



Buddhism is about the fate that brings people together. When I finished reporting the Shangri-la Art Festival in 2003 it was the Year of Water Sheep in Tibetan calendar. It is a rare opportunity since it happens once every sixty years. So I and three companions joined the 280-km long pilgrimage around the snow-covered Meili Mountains, bringing tents, sleeping bags, altimeter, compass, flashlights, food and medicine.

First Day: Get the Key First before Leaving

The stars were still twinkling when I awoke but the orange light had just crept out from the top of the snow-covered Meili Mountains. The Lancangjiang River at the foot of the cliff was still in pitch dark and the sound of the

Previous page: Followers of Tibetan Buddhism made a pilgrimage trip on foot around the 280-km Meili Mountains in celebrating the Year of Water Sheep.

1. About a hundred thousand Tibetan people from Tibet, Yunnan, Sichuan, Qinghai and Gansu took part in the pilgrimage trip to the Meili Snow Mountains in celebrating the Year of Water Sheep in Tibetan calendar in 2003.
2. Kawagebo, the main peak of the Meili Mountains with an elevation of 6,740 m, ranks the first among the eight sacred mountains in Tibet.



How To Make A Pilgrimage Trip to Meile?

Itinerary:

Day 1: Arrive at Yangzan (elevation 1,960 m) to meet the guides and hire horses, then visit Zhixintang Temple.

Day 2: Set off from Yangzan in the morning and arrive at Yongzhi Village at noon with beautiful scenery on the way. Light and easy.

Day 3: Leave Yongzhi Village (2,260 m) in the morning to climb the mountains and stay in Mazhuitong (3,380 m). Hard walking.

Day 4: Climb Duokela Peak (4,080 m) and Duokelaka Peak (4,479.6 m) and then stay in Zhangqielu. Hard walking.

Day 5: Stay in Abing Village at night. Average difficulty.

Day 6: Enter the gorge of the Nuijiang River through Lakangla. Go upstream to Quzhu along the Nuijinag River and stay at the riverside. Average difficulty.

Day 7: Set off to Zhana. Stay in Chawalong Township at night. Light and easy.

Day 8: Set off and stay in Gebu at night. Average difficulty.

Day 9: Stay between Gezala and Laide. Average difficulty.

Day 10: Stay in Meiqiubugong (4,200 m) after passing Laide. It is the highest camping elevation for this trip so attention has to be paid to keeping warm. Hard walking.

Day 11: Set off in the morning and climb Shuola (4,185 m, the highest peak for this trip) and then down to Meilishui from there to take a bus to Deqen. Hard walking.

Contact : Li Xiaokang

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Note: The elevations may not be correct.

The Trip around the Mountain:

Tibetan people say each sacred mountain has its own animal to symbolise the year of its birth. Meili Snow Mountains was born in the year of the sheep in the Tibetan calendar and 2003 was the year of water sheep, the 60th birthday of the Meili Snow Mountains. There are both long

and short trips around the mountain. The short one from Wenquan Village of Deqen near the riverside of the Lancangjiang River to Yubeng with a one-way distance of 28 km takes two days. The long trip starts from Yangzan Bridge of Deqen with a distance of 280 km, and climbs over seven 4,000-m high snow-covered peaks, passing through dense primitive forests. There are almost no villages and hotels on the way so people have to bring sufficient food for the 10-day trip. Local people think the short trip will protect them to live a quiet and peaceful life while the long trip will accumulate virtue for their future life. Most pilgrims would take both trips if possible. The pilgrims have to go on foot and riding a horse is considered disrespectful.

Transport for the Short Trip

The mini-bus from Deqen county town to Wenquan takes about two hours at a price of 18 yuan. A chartered bus is 150 yuan. From Zuma of Wenquan to Yubeng costs 100 yuan and back, 70 yuan. The best time is from the end of June to early October since the mountain is sealed off by heavy snow from November to April.

Accommodation: 20 yuan in Aqingbu Inn, Yubeng.

Fee for the mountain: 65 yuan

Transport for the Long Trip

To Yangzan Bridge by mini-bus from Deqen to

Yanmen costs 25 yuan, and a chartered bus costs 250 yuan.

Points for Attention:

People taking the long pilgrimage trip should be healthy. If you have mountain sickness, hypertension, heart problems or diabetes consult a doctor first. There are temporary shops and inns on the 280-km road only in the year of sheep so when you go in other years you have to furnish yourself with a tent, sleeping bag, climbing boots, waterproof clothes, canteen, flashlight and medicine. Most important is food for 10 days. It is also very important to select a good local guide and horses have to be hired according to the number of the people with you. Generally one horse can carry 60 kg and if you hire three horses or more it is better to have a groom. It costs 80 to 100 yuan for a horse every day and 50 yuan for each guide or groom everyday. You have to pay the guide and groom two more days for them to go back from Meilishui to Yangzan.

About the Writer:

Mr. Xie has visited many places during 10 years of working in the China Tourism Press. But this pilgrimage is a first for him.



A Pilgrimage to Meili Snow Mountains

waves dashing over the rocks could be heard indistinctly. Pilgrims sleeping on the road on the other side of the river had already got up and seven or eight campfires were visible with people moving around. They did not have tents and sleeping bags, so generally two of them shared a cotton-padded quilt or covered themselves with a sheepskin jacket. In order to protect themselves against rain, they brought some plastic sheets. When sleeping they put one sheet on the ground and another on top of the quilt.

Before starting a pilgrimage, people have to burn joss sticks and offer a vow to the god in the designated temples. There are three designated temples in the Meili Mountains and Zhixintang Temple is one of the three. Usually there are two monks in the temple. It was said that the Living Buddha Awang Cicun from Ganzi, Sichuan was there so we went for a visit. Under the guidance of a monk, we went into a room next to the hall and saw the Living Buddha sitting cross-legged on a dark red mattress. There were many hada, long pieces of silk used as greeting gift, beside him. I put my palms together and bowed to him and then took a string of turquoise from my neck to ask for a blessing. He stroked my head and then took the string of beads, chanting some scriptures and then finished the blessing by blowing it several times.

Abu and Nyima Tselin, the two guides brought a horse, a mule and a donkey with them instead of the three horses we had arranged. Abu complained that it was not bad to have a donkey since it was difficult to find a horse in this busy travel season. But since the donkey could only carry thirty kilograms, I, He Guihua (Naxi ethnic group), Pingtse (Tibetan) and Linsen (Tibetan) had to share the burden for the donkey.

Second Day: A Family Polyandrous Family

Starting off from a narrow path along the Lancangjiang River, we soon came across the Yongzhi River valley. It was cool and comfortable when the breeze blew gently.

At noon we were in the house of Anaqing in Yongzhi Village. Anaqing, 37 years old, was lively and always beaming with smiles. He shared his wife with his young brother. I asked curiously, "Why do you have the same wife with your brother?" He told me, "There is little arable land in Yongzhi Village and if I and my brother each has a wife we have to divide our land, which is not enough to support a family. Since we share one wife we do not have to divide the land and houses." I asked again, "How did you get your marriage certificate?" "I went to the office with Cili Lachu to get the marriage certificate while the wedding ceremony was held for her and my brother." The village had about 90 households and eleven of them are polyandrous. Usually the wife does household chores and feeds livestock while the husbands go out to work in turns. At that time the brother of Anaqing was herding. When the young brother was home Anaqing would go to Deqen to work. I inquired,



"How about the children, yours or your brother's?" He gave a hearty laugh, "It doesn't matter. He is our child anyway."

Quick Changes

Yongzhi Village, at an elevation of 2,260 m, plants maize half of the year and qingke barley the other half year, but herding is the main income source. Several years ago the Nature Association of the United States popularised the use of marsh gas as fuel, and people began to cook with marsh gas, so the trees have been protected.

The world is changing all the time. Last year the family fixed the pot-shaped satellite TV antenna and last week a telephone was installed. It seemed that Anaqing felt a little depressed since no one called. In order to please him I called home and asked them to call back immediately. Anaqing took the phone at once when it rang and answered, "Please wait, please wait." He was even more excited than me. But that caused a false alarm for my



family because they thought I had been kidnapped.

Third Day: Magic Effect of the Pill

The next morning we went on our way again. There was a small shop on the slope of the Longna Mountain pasture selling instant noodles, compressed biscuits, mineral water, battery and rubber-soled shoes. The goods were carried up by horse every day from the Yangzan Bridge.

It drizzled in the afternoon. The pilgrims on the trip all got wet, shaking with cold, so they walked faster. It started to snow when we arrived at Yongshitong so we had to stay in an inn. There were planks on the two sides of the inn serving as beds, two yuan for each person and 10 yuan for a cotton-padded quilt. I was surprised to see an electric light and a recorder playing music. It turned out that the inn had an old portable generator using melted water from the snow-covered mountains.

I saw that about 30 or 40 people were sleeping in a

dilapidated house with broken walls. An old man leaning on the corner of the wall was groaning. He was from Nagqu in the north of Tibet and had been walking for a month. His 10 jin (Chinese unit of weight, about half a kilogram) of zanba, one jin of butter and two pieces of brick tea had been finished a long time so he had to beg for food. He looked weak and I gave him two pain-killers.

When I returned to the inn I worried a lot about the old man. What if he got worse after taking the medicine? So I went back to him. I saw that he was eating zanba. It seemed that the medicine worked well. Just at that moment, people crowded around me to ask for medicine with various painful expressions on their faces, because they thought I had some magic medicine. I really did not know what to do.

Fourth Day: Modern Garbage a Problem

Duokelaka Peak, at 4,480 m, was the highest mountain we had come by and the second highest of our trip. The guide cut off six walking sticks for us. I was so excited to see the hanging sutra streamers on Duokelaka Peak after walking about four hours. As we climbed up my legs felt like jelly and I breathed hard. It seemed that my heart would break so I had to stop a while. Just then about 20 pilgrims came up and a 30-year-old woman looked at me with kindness. I returned her smile. Then she came to offer help with my bag. I tried hard to catch up but failed and waved them to go ahead.

Finally we climbed to the top of the Duokelaka Peak, covered with snow. A monk sitting on a felt rug beat a drum while chanting. I hanged the sutra streamer first and then looked for the woman with my bag. I did not see her so I was a little worried. After crossing the peak we were in Zayu, in Tibet. Going down along a

1. In the early morning the Tibetan pilgrims set off from the Feilai Temple, Deqen, starting their 280 m-long trip around the snow-covered Meili Mountain.
2. Feilai Temple in Deqen is one of the designated temples for pilgrims to worship the Buddha and to make a wish before starting of the trip.



A Pilgrimage to Meili Snow Mountains



zigzag path, I saw a group of people sitting around a campfire. Just then the woman carrying the bag rushed to me. I got my bag and wanted to pay her, but she refused and went on her way. It turned out they sat there to wait for me.

Tibetan pilgrims used to bring zanba, butter tea and dried meat on pilgrimage so people did not see such garbage before. Nowadays, Along the road were instant noodle bags, water bottles, beer bottles, tins, plastic bags, and used batteries. Handling garbage is a big problem in such a quickly developing world.

Water and firewood are the main prerequisites for choosing a campsite. Of course it is better if the place is sheltered from the wind. When it was getting dark, we sat around the fire to cook instant noodles. Then I put a plastic bag of instant noodles on the fire and it disappeared at once in the tongues of fire. Pingtse told me that dirty things should not be put on the fire since the fire was holy and pure. After eating we all felt sleepy, and it didn't take me long to fall asleep.

Fifth Day: The Youngest Pilgrim

About 3 a.m. I was woken by the sound of confused

footsteps. I opened the tent and saw dimly about 100 people moving like a giant dragon on the mountain path lit by two torches. Then I went to the stream to wash my face, and the icy water was piercing cold.

At lunchtime we met a group of about 60 Tibetan pilgrims from Baxoi. A woman had brought her six-month old baby and was breastfeeding leaning against a tree trunk. The baby, the youngest pilgrim I saw on the trip, was so cute with a reddish face.

It was hard to avoid stepping on animal droppings on the way. Tibetan people think that the dung of domestic animals is not dirty because they eat grass. That's why they usually use the dried dung as fuel.

Pilgrims Going in the Opposite Direction

In the afternoon we arrived at Luasenla Peak, at 3840 m. In addition to the sutra streamers, colourful clothes, hats and scarves were also hanging on the branches. And around the Manidui (formed by stones with Tibetan language and various patterns carved on them), there was a thick layer of zanba with many porcelain bowls on it. And toy-like houses nearby were linked up by single-log ladders. They were even more brilliant than the experimental art of the so-

called vanguard artists.

Just then we met about 10 pilgrims coming the opposite direction. Who were these audacious people going in the opposite direction? It turned out that they were disciples of Bon from Qamdo. Bon is an old local religion of Tibet followed by most Tibetans before the introduction of Buddhism. Tibetan Buddhism thrived during the reign of Chisong Detsan (762-797). It was said that the eminent monk Zhanba Namka of Bon debated with the Buddhist master Padmasambhava in 785 of the Tibetan calendar and finally Chisong Detsan proclaimed that Buddhism won. So he ordered all the disciples of Bon either to convert to Buddhism or leave the central part of Tibet. At present only three percent of Tibetan people believe in Bon, mainly in Dengqen, Baqen and Gobu areas.

These Bon disciples circled several times against the clock. Then some old people threw their clothes up in the tree and some women hung their beads, bracelets and hairpins on the branches or rocks.

Ballroom In A Mountain Village

We had already walked for more than six hours from the early morning when we climbed over Xinkangla Peak. Not long after a village suddenly appeared before our eyes. The terraced fields in the shape of petals looked really mysterious. This was Abing Village, the first village after four days. We were all very excited.

As soon as we entered the village several dogs jumped out from the lane. I was a little frightened at first but I found that they were really not so aggressive. Just then some children rushed out. Some brave ones went forward to stroke my bag, then hurriedly retreated.

There were about 80 households in the village. Though Abing Village belongs to Tibet, it is closer to Deqen of Yunnan. It takes seven days to get to Zayu, Tibet on foot from Abing Village, but only four days to Deqen, Yunnan.



We stayed in Gyangtso's house. After supper his daughter invited us to go to a ballroom. There was beer, soft drinks and snacks, and benches were put around the dance floor. Several young men were dancing under the dim light following the Tibetan music from the CD. Then some girls joined them. One bottle of beer cost six yuan, double the ordinary price. I was curious and asked them why didn't they drink the qingke wine. The young man answered that it was the fashion to drink beer. I asked for a bottle of beer. The young man cleaned the bottle with his cloth and then opened it with his teeth. I drank a little bit and I noticed that people around sometimes looked at me with an envious expression. Income in Abing Village is very low so beer was a luxury for them.

The Lowest Point of Our Trip

There were about 40 students and only one teacher in Abing Primary School, divided into higher and lower

1. Tibetan pilgrims can only get necessary vitamins by drinking tea on the way since they do not eat any vegetables and fruits but just buttered tea, *zanba* and dried beef and mutton.
2. Since their light-coloured left sleeves are easy to be dirtied so they each wear one of the oversleeve on their left arm.
3. On the pilgrimage trip around the mountain, no living things are to be killed otherwise you will commit an unpardonable sin.



A Pilgrimage to Meili Snow Mountains



grades. When the teacher was lecturing for the lower grade students, the higher grade did reviewing themselves. When the teacher was with the higher students, the lower grade had to review their lessons. After graduation from the primary school they go to the county town to study in the middle school. Generally they don't go to high school because on the one hand it was too expensive for them, and it is also far away. On the other hand, the family would lose a labourer. When I learnt that the students had never

had a picture taken together, I talked to the teacher and asked if I could take a photograph. They were so excited that some of them climbed up the roof of the house, some standing on the ladder, some in front of the gate. I was both happy and worried about those kids.

Sixth Day: Crossing the Flying Stone Shoal

Lakangla Peak in the gorge of the Nujiang River has an elevation of 1,700 m, the lowest we came across on our trip. We had lunch at a small temple on the riverside and then took a short rest. We took off the sweaters and sweat pants because it was hot and stuffy, so we were light on our feet. The Tibetan people did not know what to do in the stuffy hot weather and the sheepskin overcoat became a burden for them. Especially for the women, who could not take off their coat because they usually do not wear pants. They suffered a lot from the hot weather.

People usually cross the Nujiang River by the suspension cable, using the inertia force produced by the drop to slide across the river with the torrents of the Nujiang River just under. Therefore their life hinges on the small pulley.

At evening as we were close to Ruoshuitang (Hot Water Pond) along the

Nujiang River, a muffled thunder-like sound was suddenly heard. Abu stopped at once saying that it was too bad that the road ahead of us was blocked. The Highway from Bingzhongluo, Gongshan to Chawalong, Zayu was under construction and workers were blasting the mountains. People might manage to pass but the horses had to wait for tomorrow for the road to be cleaned up. So we decided to unload our luggage from the horses and ask the road builders to help us carry them while the horses took a

different route. In this way we did not have to wait for the next day. The blasted mountain route was not only steep but also dangerous because rocks might fall down at any time. Three road builders carried our things about seven or eight times so we paid them 180 yuan, equal to two days' salary.

Seventh Day: The Cheapest Satellite Phone Call

We set off at dawn and saw about a hundred pilgrims stood against the cliff in the distance waiting for the blasting. The rumbling of blasting was heard, and falling stones and rocks raised clouds of dust. The pilgrims just rushed forward without waiting for the stones and rocks to be cleaned up.

After passing the dangerous road, the flying stone shoal, appeared about three or four hundred metres in front of us. The slope is covered with white cobblestones and egg-sized stones may fall down at any time. Sometimes it is difficult to avoid it because when you see the falling stones it is already late. Abu said, "The flying stones fall down accompanied with howling like ghosts." It made my hair stand on end as I heard that. After passing the shoal safely many people couldn't help turning back, chanting the six-

word incantation: an, ma, ni, ba, mi, hong.

At noontime we were in a vast area of grassland. It was hot under the scorching sun and some Tibetan pilgrims sat under the trees with stone stoves to make buttered tea. They put tea, butter and salt in the kettle. They squeezed the sheepskin wind bag to make the fire roar so the tea was made quickly. They ate zanba and dried beef and mutton together with the tea. When they saw us they waved and smiled to us. Though they were not good at talking, their beautiful laughs indicting their honest, simple and kind natures that left me with a deep impression.

We arrived at Zhana, county seat of Chawalong Township, at nightfall. Zhana had a 500-m long street with township government office building, school, shops and hotels on both sides. Houses along the street were low and only a few people were seen on the street, but the howling of the wind and jingling of horse

1. It is the first time for the students and the teacher of the primary school in Abing Village, Chawalong Township of Tibet, to have a picture taken together in front of the gate of their school.
2. The path is as wide as the shoulder with the steep cliffs on one side and the rolling Nujiang River beneath.



A Pilgrimage to Meili Snow Mountains



bells made people feel something was unusual. Highways in the south of Tibet only reach Zayu County Seat and people have to cross over four snow-covered mountains to Chawalong Township from Zayu. It is not easy for people to visit this place. The official of the township told me that five years ago a newly elected head of Zayu County came here to inspect the work, after seven days' arduous journey, eating and sleeping in the open. He never came back again. And two years ago, two ambitious young men who came to help the building of Tibet were here together with a horse caravan after traveling four days from Bingzhongluo. The route they took was an ancient route along the Nujiang River between Yunnan and Tibet, much better than other roads. Chawalong Township always transports their materials and goods by this road.

It seems that Chawalong Township is cut off from the outside world since there is no highway. The only means for them to connect with the outside was a satellite telephone installed in the duty office of the township government. But usually nobody uses it except calls for work to the county government office. The township government regulated the price at one yuan per minute for private calls, no matter where. No doubt this is the cheapest satellite phone call in the world, so we all called home to tell them we were all right.

Living Things Cannot Be Killed on the Pilgrimage Trip

We stayed in a small inn which only had several dust-

covered beds because usually only few people stayed there. First we cleaned the room and beds with a broom. As I saw some chickens running here and there I wanted to buy one to cook together with some potatoes for our supper. But we talked with several families, and none of them would sell us a chicken, regardless of the price. It turned out that those chickens were safe, because killing them would violate a taboo. No living things can be killed on the pilgrimage.

Eighth Day: Spend Savings on Clothes and Decorations

We went on our way, leaving Chawalong Township, and arrived at Gebu at nightfall. We stayed at the house of Tsenyi Lhama. Sitting around the butter lamp we drank buttered tea and ate walnuts. The average income of each family in this area was about six or seven thousand yuan each year because they pick and sell Chinese caterpillar fungus, a rare medical herb, growing only in the plateau area. Tsenyi Lhama had married into this village from a pastoral area. I asked her about the difference between the pastoral and farm areas. She told me that the herdsmen spend almost all their savings on buying clothes and gold, silver, pearls and other decorations, while in the farm area

1. There are many branches in the upper reaches of the Nujiang River. Suspension cables installed over the wide branches and wooden structured arm-reaching bridges over the narrow branches.
2. Though today people can take a bus to go on the trip but pious pilgrims still choose to finish the trip on foot.

people spend their money on building houses and buying household electrical appliances.

Ninth to Eleventh Day: Rescued from the Ice Tongue

We left Gebu in the early morning and then crossed over the Gezala Peak. We camped half way up the mountain and there met two photographers from Kunming. It happened that their guide was from the same village as Abu and the two photographers were friends of He Guihua. So we had dinner together and He Guihua invited us to drink white wine. Since we were so excited we drank a little bit too much and then we all fell into sound sleep, since we were also tired from walking.


The Shuola mountain pass, the last one of our trip, is at an elevation of 4,185 m, the highest we had came by. In order to make sure that we could cross over the pass in the early morning we had our lunch in Laide and then hurriedly went on our way. We camped at 4,200 m height that night. We sat around the fire and cooked our food with all the rice we had. At night the temperature dropped down, so Abu did not want to take the rug off the horse since he worried that it was too cold. I was really moved by his kindness. Finally we six people shared the two tents.

When silence still reigned everywhere before dawn, we set off with the light of the flashlight. An hour later rocks in various forms could be seen and a strong wind blew, hurting our noses and ears. As we climbed up I

breathed harder and harder. When we came to Shuola Pass the sun was still hiding in the clouds and the wind was still howling, while the colourful sutra streamers hanging around Manidui waved with the wind. It is said that one wave of the sutra streamer was meant to convey the scriptures to the Heaven. I stopped there for a short time to hang all the remaining sutra streamers.

Going down after crossing over the pass we would reach Deqen, Yunnan, the end of our trip. When we passed an ice tongue I got stuck. The Tibetan people came over to help. Hand in hand we slowly went over the ice tongue. After passing I thought that if I had fallen, I would have dragged the others with me. I was really moved by their noble spirit and courage.

After passing the bare brown gravel the low plateau azalea appeared before our eyes and the melted water under the stones joined gradually to form a stream. Going down along the stream we saw grassland and dense trees and the stream had more water. Going down the slope it seemed that we were in a different season and even the colours of the leaves were also different. There were really more beautiful things than the eye could take in.

All of a sudden someone shouted, "I see the highway." When I saw the buses running on the Yunnan-Tibet Highway along the Lancangjiang River, I had mixed feelings. The 11-day trip would soon be over and I would go back to live a normal life again. 







This is a city where being a hawker is better than being employed, because you are your own boss. The life goal for most Wenzhou people is to spread their business to the rest of the country, or better yet, to the rest of the world.

Wenzhou

Every Man is a Businessman

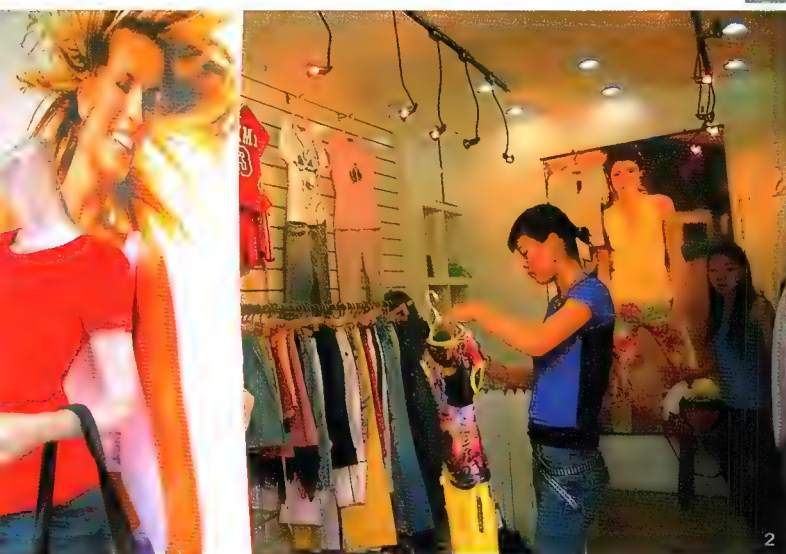
Photos & Article by Xie Guanghui

1. The shops on Wuma Street
2. Stretching from Fuqian Street in the west to Jiefang Street in the east, Wuma Street is a pedestrian precinct in the heart of Wenzhou's bustling city centre. The street is decorated by a sculpture of five galloping horses.

Wenzhou City: from Water Town to Metropolis

Situated on the southeast coast of Zhejiang Province, Wenzhou is blessed with a mild climate all year round, hence its name — "wen" means "warm" and "zhou" means "prefecture". Built over 1,600 years ago, the city was crisscrossed by rivers and canals in its early days, and the residents here commuted mainly by boat. But as the population continuously grew, almost all the waterways in Wenzhou had been reclaimed by the end of the 1970s.

At the heart of the busy city centre is Wuma Street, a pedestrian precinct in a commercial area, and it is marked at the junction by a sculpture of five galloping horses. Wuma Street was once filled with



old-style Chinese private banks, department stores, as well as shops selling clothes, silk, metal products, herbs, and medicines.

The most famous products of Wenzhou can be found in the busy Wuma Street: clothes, shoes, lighters, jewelry and hardware. Shopping here is like taking a tour of Wenzhou's culture and history.

Moreover, a mixture of Chinese and western architectures from the days when the city was first built have been preserved, such as the 1927 Yunbo Shopping Mall which has a Baroque exterior but a traditional layout inside.

Wenzhou People: Always Taking the Lead

A less than 20 minutes walk would lead you from Wuma Street to the old Chengxi Street, where its low wooden houses are shops handling both wholesale and retail clothing. It is very common for Wenzhou people, especially young people, to open

their own business. They find being their own boss a better option than working for others, which translates as a loss of freedom and dignity.

The shop owners on Chengxi Street are mostly fashionable women in their 20s or 30s who come from the village of Zhoubian. Their products are trendy but reasonably priced, and therefore, their businesses are blooming. Zhang Xiaohui, 25, has opened her shop across the street from the Church for five or six years, and her retired Christian mother helps looking after her children. Zhang told us that bargaining is common here. It is a bit of a hassle for her but her consumers seem to enjoy it. Although most customers could afford the few extra dollars, they would feel that they were getting more for their dollar when received a bargain. To close a deal, she sometimes would give way even when it was a bad bargain, because a high inventory turnover is simply good for the business.





Local Businesses: a Novel Coffee Lifestyle

A friend took me to a place called Lafang Cafe Restaurant for dinner. After we were seated, the waiter laid chopsticks and dishes of condiments on the table. To my astonishment, my friend ordered chicken feet, snails and several hot dishes! It turned out that the coffee here is complimentary, but the main dishes are Asian cuisine. The cappuccino I ordered came in a very thick white ceramic cup that acted like a thermos cup. It was rich and superb, but a coffee shop that sells snack such as chicken feet and snails? Apparently it is common here in Wenzhou, and the fusion of eastern cuisine and western beverage is the secret of Lafang's success.

The owner of Lafang was a woman in her 30s. She opened her

first restaurant in 2001, followed by over 30 branches in the following three years. In contrast, another coffee shop with foreign investment in the same town spent more than a million yuan (~US \$ 120,000) in interior decorations, yet it only lasted less than a year. That shop was sold quite recently to Lafang for less than seven hundred thousand yuan.

How did Lafang outperform traditional coffee shops? It is because Lafang understands the bargaining nature of the Wenzhou people. Even though the people here can afford a 30-yuan-a-cup coffee, but they find it a better bargain to be able to have both coffee and food at Lafang for the same price.

Sex Toy Factory

Another thriving local business includes that of the We Brothers. Nicknamed the "Sex Toy Tycoons", they have been producing sex products for 10 years and their products now rank in the top 10 in the world.

In 1992 when China's first sex shop opened in Beijing, Wu Hui paid a visit and felt it was a promising line. He opened China's second sex product shop in Wenzhou two years later. At that time, there were only a few varieties of products in the market, and most of which were either



1. Once crisscrossed with waterways, Wenzhou now has only a few ancient banyan trees left behind.
2. Chengxi Street is a fashion street. Shop owners are mostly young women who run both wholesale and retail businesses.
3. Female patrons dominate this Dongfang Fitness Centre.
4. This gold and silver jewelry shop in Wuma Street attracts people with stylish images.
5. The whole mall is filled with clothing stores.
6. Enjoying coffee and chicken feet at Lafang Cafe Restaurant
7. Lafang Cafe Restaurant is well-known in Wenzhou.

smuggled in or poorly manufactured in underground plants. Wu was confident that they could do better. Hard work earned them authorised certificates and approval from the State's medicine control department. This led to the establishment of China's first sex and health product company, and the We Brothers are now exporting their products internationally.

Wu Hui showed me around in his production unit. Workers were busy lining up sex toys on the production line for the next process, and most of them were young girls in their 20s. I asked a girl if she had told her family about her work. She blushed and shook her head.

Insignia for the United Nations

Wenzhou-made products attract clients from all over the world, including the United Nations, the United States Police Headquarters and the Hong Kong Garrison of the People's Liberation Army (PLA).

Cangnan's Jinxiang Town, 100 km south of Wenzhou, is famed for its badges. Here is the production centre for 70% of the nation's canteen magnetic cards and meal cards, as well as 80% of the nation's unit identity cards, including badges for students, workers, and even government officials of the tax departments. The town is also responsible for most of China's forgery-proof labels for white wine and packaging boxes. It is odd that Wenzhou, once notorious nationwide for forging poor-quality fakes, is the place that created the anti-forgery labels widely-used today by the country's top-brand products. In addition, the army and police badges of over a dozen countries including United Nations's Peace-keeping Force, the US and Russia, are also manufactured in this tiny town of Jinxiang.



The owner of this badge factory is the 48-year-old Chen Jiashu. After retiring from the army and returning to his hometown in 1979, Chen co-founded this company with friends in 1983 to make school badges and memorial

badges. Other shareholders later withdrew and Chen has since owned the business alone.

The 1990 Asian Games in Beijing brought him new opportunities. The production of the "Asian Games Opening Ceremonies Memorial Badge" was first handed to a Korean enterprise which failed to produce the samples after they were more than two months overdue. A Guangdong joint-venture company was then approached,



but the deal collapsed as the production cost of ¥3.50 per badge was too high. Chen heard the news and offered the price of ¥2.50 per badge. Finally, both the low cost and superior silk printing technology of his company impressed the judge and eventually won him the contract. His order of 500,000 memorial badges for Beijing's Asian Games Opening Ceremonies marked another successful business venture for Wenzhou.

Key to Success: High-Quality and Low-Priced Goods

What are some of Chen's trade secrets? His diligence in monitoring each production procedure closely and his



excellent record of delivering goods on time. What's more, Chen's accomplishment was built upon a series of successful ventures.

In 1991, Chen met the director of an American supplier for the US army, who paid his factory a visit. Two weeks later, Chen was handed the contract for the production of the US army badges.

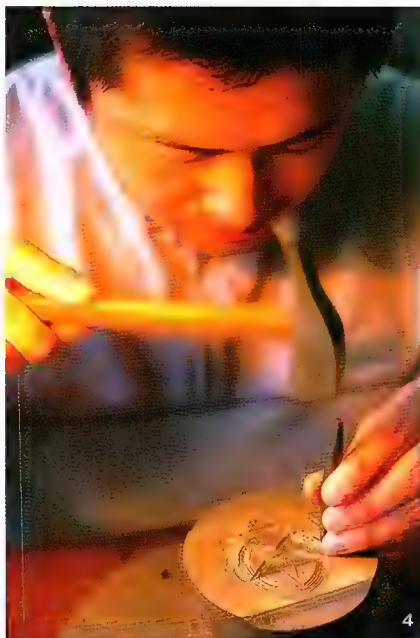
In the spring of 1993, Chen received a call from a Chinese American, saying the US police were having a change in fashion. Chen at once flew to Washington and visited the police headquarters. He was able to offer high quality products and charged only half the amount of the American manufacturers. On top of it, he waived deposits for the police department, which at last won him the contract to produce 680,000 US police badges.

Referred by the US Police Headquarters, the United Nations also requested Chen to produce army badges for their Peace-keeping Forces. Having a good reputation, Chen went on to make army badges for a dozen countries including England, Russia, Saudi Arabia, Argentina and Laos.

Of course, China remains his biggest client. Working for the United Nations caught the attention for the Rear Service Headquarters of the PLA. China's armies began to prepare for a change of uniform in 1994. In 1997, the Hong Kong Garrison were also getting new wardrobe. Two army officers actually came to the factory and designed the badges as the production was underway.

Once again, I was shown the exceptional work ethic and entrepreneur spirit of the Wenzhou people in this trip.

Translated by Megina Kwan



Travel Tips

How to get there

Airlines: Wenzhou Yongqiang Airport is 24 km southeast and a 40-min ride from the city centre. There are flights to over 30 cities, including Hong Kong, Beijing, Shanghai, Guangzhou and Shenzhen. Enquiry tel: (0577) 8833 3197.

Train services: There are at least nine connections between Hangzhou and Wenzhou daily. Express trains take about seven hours while normal trains take around nine hours. Hard seat ticket: ¥57*; Hard sleeper: ¥115; Soft sleeper: ¥175. Hangzhou train station ticketing hotline: 950 011 7799. Wenzhou train station enquiry tel: (0577) 8838 9999

Bus services: Wenzhou has six long-distance bus stations. Express buses depart every 20 minutes from 6:50-18:10 daily. Hangzhou has four long-distance bus stations. Connection with Wenzhou is available at Hangzhou South Bus Station (bus no. 14, 20, 39, 44, 322, 836 on Qiutao Road). Express bus departs every 20 minutes from 6:50-19:30 daily (about 35 departures). Ticket around ¥122.

Hangzhou
Zhejiang
Province

Wenzhou

Accommodation

It is easy to find accommodation in Wenzhou. Here are two of the more unusual choices:

Wenzhou Workers' Sanatorium: situated on the Jiangxinyu (the island in the middle of the Oujiang River), the building was the former British Embassy in Wenzhou. The architecture may be somewhat old-fashioned but the location provides a first-class environment. Guests do not have to pay for ferry tickets. Each guestroom, renovated from the original suite, can accommodate four people and is equipped with a bathroom. ¥98 per person, including accommodation, meals and ferry tickets to the island (ticket price ¥20). Ferry operates from 8:00-23:00. Add: Jiangxinyu, Wenzhou. Tel: (0577) 8820 1213.

Wenzhou Hotel: The hotel is next door to Wenzhou Daily newspaper. To the west is the pedestrian precinct of Wuma Street, while to its east lie Huagai Hill and Zhongshan Park. It offers a convenient transport and a nice environment. Add: 61 Wenzhou Park Road. Tel: (0577) 8882 2222. Room rates: Standard ¥288.

Sights

Jiangxin Temple: Built in 1137, this temple sits on the island in the middle of the Oujiang River. The temple is flanked by a couple of pagodas. The east pagoda was built in 869 and is 28 m high. The six-sided west pagoda was built in 969. Winding stairs once reached the top of the 32-m, seven-storey brick structure. The east structure was from the Tang Dynasty (618-907), while the west one was built in the early Song Dynasty (960-1279).

To get there: Bus no. 33, 26 run between the railway station and the river crossing.

Admission ticket: ¥20 (including ferry).

Opening hours: 8:00-22:00

Restaurant

Lafang Cafe Restaurant: there are over 30 branches throughout the country, and Wenzhou alone has four. Its flagship restaurant is at no.271 Xuyuan Road, Wenzhou city. Tel: (0577) 8833 6268.

*US \$1 ~ ¥8

1. China is a huge market for sex products, which are made mostly by village girls.
2. Chen shows the badges his factory produced for the US Police Headquarters.
3. Workers at Jinxiang Badge Factory are working on the badges for the PLA's Hong Kong and Macao garrisons.
4. Cleaning the mold for the US police badges

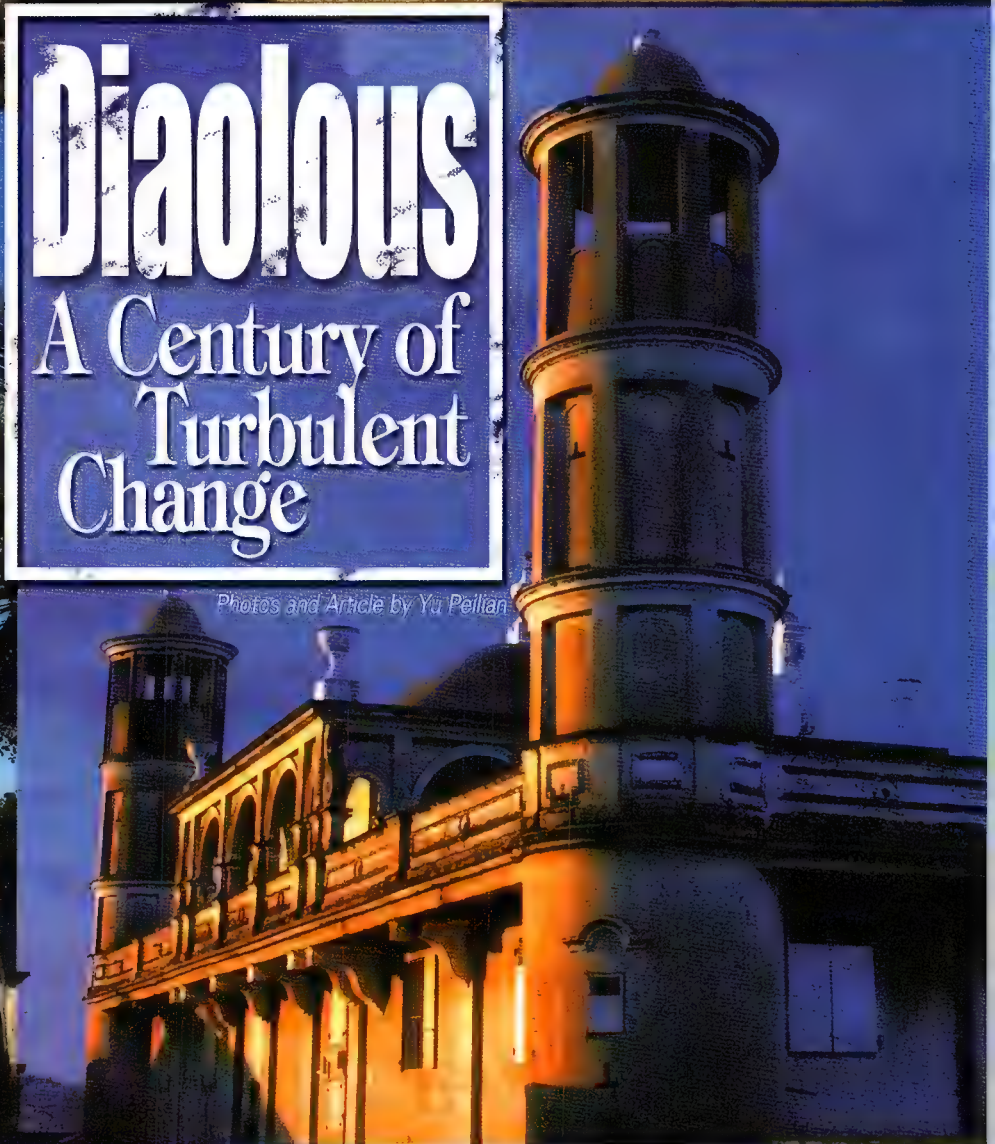
global
chinese



Diabolous

A Century of Turbulent Change

Photos and Article by Yu Peilian



Kaiping is a small rural town located in the low-lying foothills in the southwestern Pearl River Delta of Guangdong Province. But what distinguishes Kaiping from other towns is the series of classical European-style buildings amidst the traditional huts. These 1,800 well-preserved "diaolous", or fortified watchtowers, form a rich and intriguing history of the overseas Chinese.

The earliest European-style diaolous belonged to the villagers who had become the labourers of the United States of America and Canada. They were known as the "Gold Mountain Uncles" by the locals, for the gold rush in US at the time made America seem like a mountain of gold.

The Rags to Riches Tale of the Labourers

The earliest Kaiping resident who went to America was a peasant. He was a coolie (an offensive name for an unskilled Asian labourer) in Hong Kong who was later sold into bond slavery in America in 1839.

After the Opium War, the Qing Dynasty (1616-1911) crumbled into turmoil and corruption. It was common for desperate farmers to go overseas and work as labourers to make a living. During that time, the gold rush as well as the 2880-km Pacific railway in America seemed like the perfect opportunity for many Chinese workers. These workers were called "sold piglets" in Cantonese dialect because they would have as many rights as the "sold piglets" once they signed their life away.

The mode of transportation for these "piglets" was crude — a wooden boat nicknamed the "cow drum barrel". These boats had two holes on either side, and they were barely strong enough for fishing close to the coast. Yet, they were used to sail across the Pacific Ocean. All labourers were confined to the bottom berth where it was dark and humid. Everyone received a small tin for water

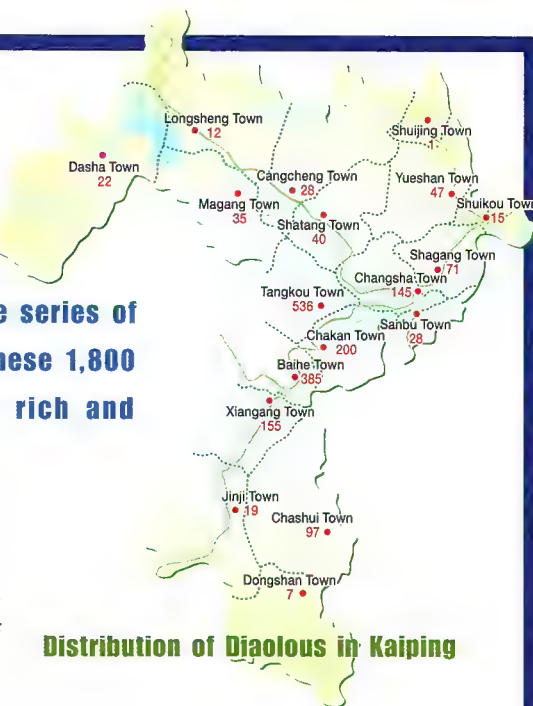
when they boarded. As the wooden boat rocked furiously in the sea, people inside were seasick and rolling on the floor. Filled with the stench of vomit, faeces and urine, the boat was nowhere near the humane condition. It took over a month to travel from Hong Kong to San Francisco by ship, and the death rate of the journey was as high as 40%. Except for the "fortunate" labourers who only suffered from bruises and boils, the rest of the people were barely hanging



onto life on arrival.

There were more incredible hardships awaited the labourers in the US and Canada. These people worked in the gold mines first, and they then joined the railway construction. The workdays were over 12 hours long and the workers suffered brutal work conditions. Death from fatigue and accidents was common, while the pure misery was also enough to drive some to suicide.

Records show that the decade of 1930-1940, the 120,000 Chinese in the US were almost exclusively of Cantonese descent from the four towns of Enping, Taishan, Kaiping and



Distribution of Diaolous in Kaiping

Xinhui.

These gold miners lived frugally and saved almost every penny. Their dream was to build their own houses in China and to provide a better life for their families. The price they paid in blood, sweat and tears eventually transformed Kaiping to be a prosperous town at the turn of the 20th century.

Baroque Buildings

The diaolous in Kaiping number in the hundreds, and each one is different in style from another. All architects are at a loss to explain the origin of the diaolous or the absence of construction blueprints. At best they describe the buildings as "quasi-Baroque style", because while the layout contains elements of traditional Chinese castles, there are features of the buildings of ancient Greek, Roman, medieval and Islam.

Whether they were building diaolous or normal houses, the returning overseas labourers were fond of putting murals on the gates and walls. Usually they are landscape paintings, but in addition to the normal elements of Chinese

Left page: Kaiping's many diaolous display a mix of architectural styles from all over the world.

Right page: The old suitcase used by the "Gold Mountain Uncles"



landscapes, there are also European buildings with arches and Roman pillars, which are strikingly similar to the diaolous in town.

Some people believe that the



foreign buildings in the painting were copied from the postcards sent by the oversea labourers. We saw a framed painting of the Golden Gate Bridge in San Francisco of 1932 in a family home in Tangkou Town. It turns out that the artisans of rural China were leaving the blueprints of foreign buildings for future generations on these murals.

Because of the differences in interpretations and variations in function, the Baroque buildings transplanted to the east had undergone some changes. In Europe, the Baroque style was often used in the construction of churches, parks and squares, yet here in Guangdong, practical concerns had to be taken into account.

Kaiping's earliest diaolous were used to ward off floods. Moreover, the end of the Qing Dynasty was a time of turmoil, and every town was thronged with thieves and bandits. Kaiping

drew special attention from robbers because of its easy access to waterways and the relatively comfortable lifestyles of the overseas Chinese families. There were break-ins and even kidnappings in town. As a result, when the "Gold Mountain Uncles" came back home to build diaolous, they needed to be sure that their buildings were burglar proof.

The hotchpotch building style of diaolous torments many people for they have not been able to find an appropriate English translation. After much consultation with experts and even UNESCO officials, the Chinese pin-yin of "Kaiping Diaolou" was decided on, because there simply isn't any frame of reference elsewhere in the world for this type of architectural style.

Diaolous had their own construction method. From 1920s onwards, the buildings used the



classic Chinese gabled roof, Sino-western, ancient Roman, medieval European castle, Turkish Islam, etc.

The Historical Town of Chikan

Established in 1662, Chikan Town is located in the centre of Kaiping. It has an area of 1.5 km² and a population of around 50,000. Chikan thrived in the 1950s as Kaiping's cultural and economic centre as well as the convenient transportation hub. It was a hotbed of economic activity with a large population early in the century, and there was no shortage of people travelling abroad. In fact, a French priest named Wei Changmao came to Chikan as early as 1897 to set up a Catholic cathedral.

Well-kept Diaolous in Zili Village

Zili is a quiet village set apart by the towering 13 diaolous, and there are 60 or so families in the village. The village was built after the floods near the end of the Qing Dynasty. It is widely believed that the land here is auspicious, therefore attracting overseas Chinese from the US, Canada, the Philippines, Japan and Thailand to buy land and build houses here. The 13 diaolous here were gradually built in the decade after the fall of the Qing Dynasty.

The group of diaolous at Zili Village has weathered the storms of the past century remarkably well. During the Great Leap Forward (1958-1960), the iron gates, masts and window frames of many places in Kaiping were taken to the project of

"Great Drive Towards Steel-Making". The gates and bolts on the Zili Village diaolous were not spared, but because the main gate couldn't be pried open, the iron windows, window bars have all been left intact. Even during the destructive period of the Cultural Revolution, the intricate diaolou carvings were left alone. The cluster of diaolous in Zili Village seems to exist in a time vacuum, greeting the world in their untouched state.

The Romance of Yunhuan Lou

Of the numerous diaolous in Zili

1. A narrow river flows through the historical Chikan Village.
2. The grandson of Meizhuo Lou's owner celebrates the rebuilding of his house.
3. Yunhuan Lou's owner Fang Wenxian was originally a scholar, and the building still houses a pair of wooden couplets he inscribed.
4. A portrait of Mr. and Mrs. Fang in Yunhuan Lou
5. The exotic murals painted by the builders
6. Yunhuan Lou has an oriental Chinese-style hall.



reinforced concrete, and all materials had to be imported. In addition, the arch, vault, and Roman pillar involved highly complicated processes of calculation, scaffolding, moulds and supports, which were all entirely different from traditional rural Chinese building methods.

Most diaolou's walls are decorated with delicate carvings, including the Baroque style flourish of scrolls and leaves, as well as scenes common in Chinese decor, such as the magpie, crane, pine, orchids of spring, chrysanthemums of autumn, classical landscapes, etc.

Many architect has been baffled by the style of Kaiping diaolous when seeing Chinese auspicious animals like phoenixes, bats and unicorns adorning arches of Roman pillars. However, what makes diaolou visually stunning is the variety of roofs. Some typical roofing designs include the

Village, the most culturally refined one has to be the "Yunhuan Lou" (Building of Clouds and Caprice). Tellingly, the signpost which reads "Only Matters of Romance" in the top-story hall was written by its owner Fang Wenxian. He was a schoolteacher early in his career. But in order to earn a living for his family, he went to the Philippines and started his own business that quickly thrived due to his fine business acumen.

Having amassed a small fortune, Fang thought of buying a house in Hong Kong, because his wife

The Reborn of Meizhuo Lou

On the Tan River in Tangkou Town lies the small Tan Village. On top of the hill just outside the village one can find a petite villa named Meizhuo Lou. Built by Xie Meizhuo in 1930, Meizhuo Lou is a two-and-a-half-storey tall building. Unlike its grand peers, Meizhuo Lou takes up only 70 m². It has an open verandah at the front. The pillars and arches are placed at the centre and the two sides, and all of the windows are double-layered with iron frames on the outside and teak on the inside. The three grey characters

Xie's most painful times were also experienced here. During the Cultural Revolution, all of his fruit trees were cut down because of the chaos and land reclamation.

After that terrible decade was over, the dilapidated Meizhuo Lou was returned to the Xie's family. To keep the late Xie Meizhuo's dreams alive, his grandson came back to the residence with his family in tow to rebuild the house. So far, the initial stages of road-building, paving, building of fish-ponds and chicken huts, planting of fruit trees as well as



repeatedly complained about the flooding and bandit attacks in her hometown. Nonetheless, his wife insisted that she wasn't going anywhere and the house must be built in the hometown. Fang could not get her to change her mind, and thus, Yunhuan Lou came into being.

The main hall is decorated in oriental style, and there used to be an exquisite traditional screen carved with dragons and phoenixes. Fang spared no expense in designing the mansion, and almost everything in the house was imported from overseas.

"Meizhuo Lou" are inscribed on top of the building. The owner was a very kind man who, upon his return to China, volunteered to teach the village children for free when he saw that there was no school available.

Xie's best times were spent at Meizhuo Lou. Here he married, went abroad to the Philippines, planted lychees, longans, star fruit and apricots. Recounting the past, his granddaughter said that they used to have so much fruit to eat that she often sold the extra guavas to the villagers. Also, they had longan trees that were as wide as a grown man's arm-span.

the renovations at "Meizhuo Lou" were finished. The newly planted guavas have already yielded fruit the size of fists, and the over 2000 chickens would be for sale soon.

Sihao Lou Guarded by the Locals

Xia Cun (Prawn Village) in Chikan Town is nicknamed "Canada Village", because most of its inhabitants have immigrated to Canada.

To get to the "Canada Village", the only route is via the tractor path. Crossing the ancient village, one can see a vista of diverse dialous. Upon our entry into Canada Village, Sihao Lou

stood tall while two rows of pretty villas seemed especially charming in the morning sun.

Sihao Lou is a diaolou of five stories high, and it has an enclosed fortress on top, which looks like a military outpost. The top of the building yields a panoramic view in the relatively flat landscape.

This village was first inhabited by four men in 1923, hence the diaolou is called "Sihao Lou" or the "Four Heroes Tower". Of the four men, descendants of the three now live in Canada. The remaining Mr. Guan is the current



with delicately carved wooden beds and an assortment of antique furniture.

Nan Lou — A War Memorial

Nan Lou (Southern Tower) is a monument to commemorate the war of resistance against the Japanese invasion. On the 17th of July 1945, just before the Japanese surrendered, seven heroes fought the enemy with great valour at Nan Lou.

The lower part of Nan Lou is made of concrete and the upper from bricks. Due to the thickness of the wall, even the Japanese cannons could not blow it apart. Tear gas was used in order to take over Nan Lou. The Japanese army killed the seven heroes brutally and

then threw their dismembered bodies into the river.

In 1999, the municipal government of Kaiping raised three million Yuan to turn Nan Lou into the "Nan Lou Memorial Park", which also included the memorial hall, the gate tower, and the Seven Heroes sculpture.

Translated by Cheng Lei

1. Tangkou Town has the highest concentration of diaolous in Kaiping, with over 500.
2. Nan Lou is a monument to the war of resistance against the Japanese.
3. Sihao Lou in the "Canada Village" was built by four men.
4. The descendants of Sihao Lou live in this building and the three arches in the hall hold spirit tablets of the ancestors.

head of the village. Before 1989, he raised chickens at home and made a nice living out of it. Now he has put up shacks on the land in front of his home to cultivate shitake mushrooms and papayas. He estimated that this plot of land would bring him an annual income of 50,000 yuan (~ US \$6000).

His eldest son's family now lives in a small two-storey brick and wood villa at the entrance of the village. The hall on the ground floor houses an altar to pay respects to the ancestors, and the three arches hold spirit tablets for ancestors. The second floor features wooden floor and ceiling,

Travel Tips

Transport: The HK China Travel Service Agency has direct buses from Hong Kong to Kaiping via the Huanggang Port. The journey is around three hours and tickets cost 180 HKD (~US \$20). Pick-up points include Tsim Sha Tsui, Prince Edward, Tsuen Wan, Tsing Yi, Shatin, Tuen Mun, and Yuen Long. Enquiries: 2789 5401.

Accommodation:

Tanjing Peninsula Hotel	Five star	
Address: No. 2, Zhongyin Lu, Kaiping City, Guangdong Province		Telephone: (0750) 233 3333
Sanbu Holiday Inn	Four star	
Address: Changsha Gangkou Lu, Kaiping City, Guangdong Province		Telephone: (0750) 228 6333
Sanbu Harbour View Hotel	Three star	
Address: No. 15, Tanjiang Xilu, Kaiping City, Guangdong Province		Telephone: (0750) 238 8888
Kaiping Broadcast & Television Building	Two star	
Address: No.2, Changsha Xijiao Lu, Kaiping City, Guangdong Province		Telephone: (0750) 221 2213

Other Attractions: Aside from diaolous, Kaiping is also home to many other attractions, such as Liyuan Garden, Chikan European Street, Liang Jinshan Scenic Area, Peacock Lake scenic area, and Kaiyuan Tower.

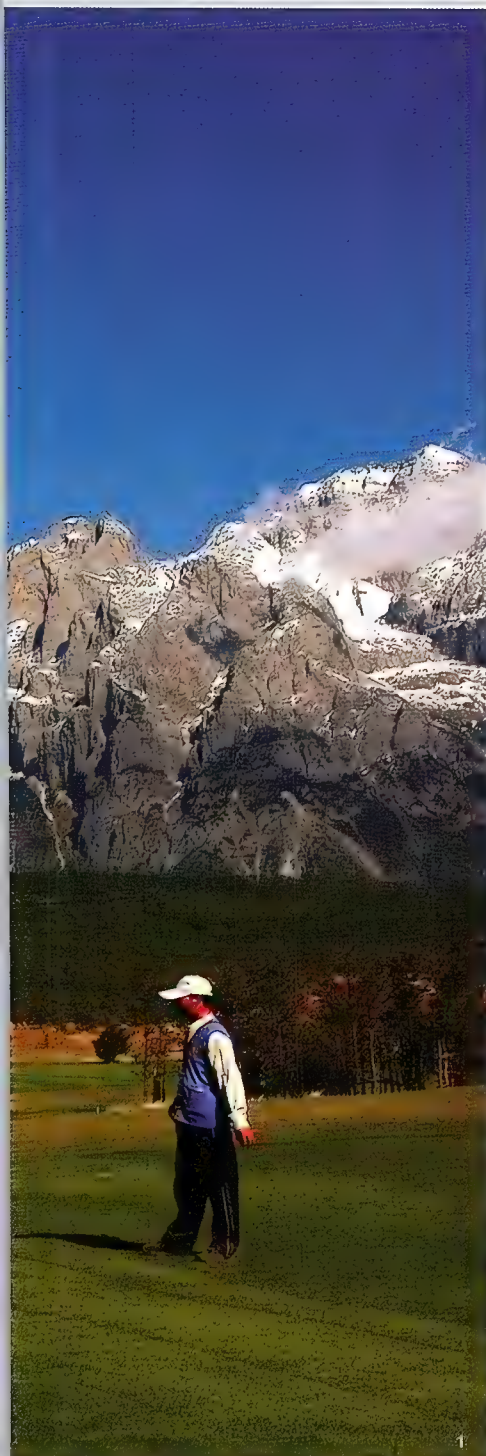
Golfing at the bottom of the Jade Dragon Snow Mountain

Photos & Article by Li Zhixiong



2

The snowcapped Yulong (Jade Dragon) Snow Mountain draws in many tourists with its elegant and unique natural scenes. But have you ever thought of playing golf on the vast grassland that lies right at its foot? Following the ball whistling an arc across the sky, one cannot help but be enchanted by the sight of the lofty snow mountain. This is probably one of the most enjoyable golf courses in the world.



As a golf beginner, I only practised the basic skills with a basket of balls at a golf course near my home in Kunming City once. I have never thought of golfing at the Lijiang Jade Dragon Golf Club until a golfer friend invited me to.

The One and Only

Situated on the eastern slope of

the Yulong Snow Mountain (Ganhaizi), the Jade Dragon Golf Club is the only snowy mountain golf course in Asia. It is sited at an altitude of 3,100 m, facing the snowcapped main peak (Shanzidou) of about 5,600 m high. The course is half an hour's drive from Lijiang, an ancient ethnic town inscribed on the World Heritage List.

Designed by Neil Haworth, with a length of 8,550 yd, the club is currently the longest 18-hole, par-72 golf course in the world. All 18 holes were designed with the different natural landscape of hills and streams. Seen through the window of the reception hall, the white snow mountain and the pure blue sky is like a scene from a movie.

Hit Further Than Ever Before

The fairway from tee-off to the green on the fifth hole is the longest in the world, 711 yd, with 13 bunkers facing the 13 peaks of the Yulong Snow Mountain. The rolling snow peaks and the soft white bunkers composed a natural "postcard" in my imagination.

Another bonus of this golf course is the weakened centrifugal force caused by altitude. Since the ball can travel further here, it always delights players.

Golfing Knows No Boundary

Admittedly, I am not a good golfer. I cannot get the ball into a 4-par hole even after 10-odd drives, and sometimes, I even lose the ball. For that reason, I decided to play on my own when I was at the Jade Dragon Golf Club.

There was no way I could remember how many drives I hit on all 18 holes on the first day. Worse still, I got trapped on the 16th hole. There

was a stream running between the tee-off and the fairway, and the water trap and trees left me a narrow entrance.

Fortunately, I got some advice from Molf, a man of the Yi ethnic group dubbed the "No. 1 golfer in Lijiang". "Molf" was actually a nickname. His real name was "Ma", but because of his excellent golfing skills, people called him "Molf" instead. Molf was brought up in a remote Yi village in Yongning County of Lijiang. When he was a child, he was good at throwing stones while herding in the wild. Later, he got a chance to learn golf and worked his way up to become manager of this golf course. Golf used to regard as a

- 1,3 The massive snow covered mountain is right in front of you when you golf.
- 2 The rolling snow peaks and the soft white bunkers become a natural "postcard".



game for the rich in China, but Molf showed me how the society had been progressing.

Sunrise on the Snow Mountain

It is impossible to escape the sight of the gorgeous mountain while playing golf here. The front nine holes are located towards the snow mountain. What's more, even the sauna room has huge floor window which presents the full mountain

view.

At night, I stayed at the Snowflake Villas. My villa was built according to the western-American style, a two-story wooden building surrounded by a pool, a cobblestone path and the wooden signs. Stars were flickering in the low blue sky, which was a rare scene in the capital of Kunming.

It is also surprisingly easy to capture sunrise in photographs from the villa, whether from the living room on the first floor or from the bathroom, bedroom or balcony on the

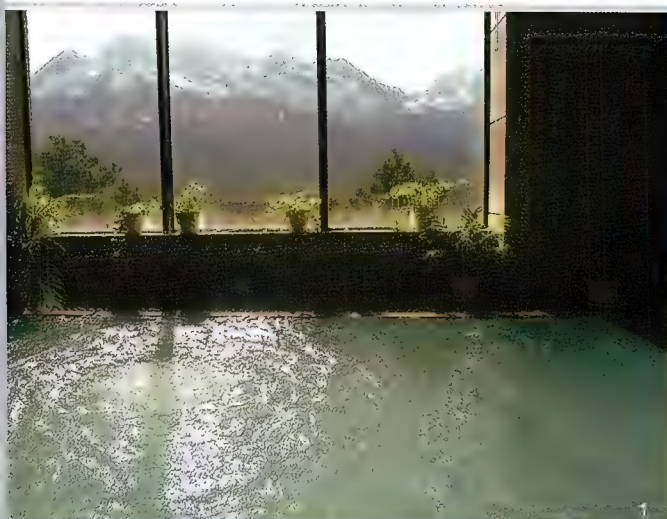
second floor. At 6 am, I watched the sun gradually painting the snow mountain with a layer of gold, and I couldn't help reaching for my camera again.



Translated by Li Xing

- 1 One can bath while enjoying the scene of the Yulong Snow Mountain.
- 2 The black wooden houses against the white snow mountain
- 3 The sunrise painting the snow peaks into gold
- 4 The restaurant in the club
- 5 The Jinlumei Villa at the Snowflake Villas





Travel Tips

Transportation: There are several daily flights from Kunming to Lijiang at a cost of 530 yuan*. Take an hour's drive by shuttle bus to the club (one-way ticket costs 60 yuan). Another route is to take a bus from downtown Lijiang to the club, about half an hour drive (one-way ticket costs 40 yuan).

Jade Dragon International Golf Club

Address: Ganhaizi, Yulong Snow Mountain, Lijiang
Golf rates: ~US \$127/ 1,050 yuan (same rates on weekdays and weekends; green fees, golf cart and caddie fees included)
Telephone: (86-0888) 516 3666
Fax: (86-0888) 516 3298
E-mail: jdgc@l.jn.cninfo.net

Accommodation: The Jinlumei Villa of the Snowflake Villas has three bedrooms, one kitchen, two bathrooms and one living room.
1,280 yuan/ night
Telephone: (86-0888) 516 3666

Other Golf Courses in Kunming:

Spring City Golf & Lake Resort

Address: Yangzong Town, east suburb of Kunming

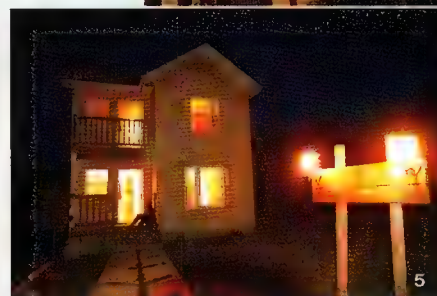
Weekday golf rates (for guests staying at the resort): US \$66/ 550 yuan
Weekday golf rates (for guests not staying at the resort): US \$178/ 1,480 yuan
Weekends/public holidays golf rates (for guests staying at the resort): US \$88/ 730 yuan
Weekends/public holidays golf rates (for guests not staying at the resort): US \$212/ 1,760 yuan
NB. Green fees, golf cart and caddie fees included

Kunming Sunshine Golf Club

Address: Seven kilometres on the Kunming-Qujing Highway from the east suburbs of Kunming
Weekday golf rates: US \$100/ 830 yuan
Weekends/public holidays golf rates: US \$120/ 996 yuan
NB. Green fees, golf cart and caddie fees included

Kunming Country Golf Club

Address: 20 km on the Kunming-Shilin Highway from the east suburbs of Kunming
Weekday golf rates: US \$87/ 720 yuan
Weekends/public holidays golf rates: US \$116/ 960 yuan
NB. Green fees and caddie fees included
Golf cart rates: 18-hole game: US \$18/150 yuan
9-hole game: US \$12/ 100 yuan
*US \$1 ~ 8 yuan



BITS AND PIECES ABOUT... NGARI AND XINJIANG-TIBET HIGHWAY



Dubbed the “No Man’s Land”, Ngari is the desert region of Xinjiang which is linked by the Xinjiang-Tibet Highway. Almost all travellers heading for Ngari have the same destinations in mind: Mount Kailash and Lake Manasarovar. Hindus, Buddhists, and the followers of Tibet’s indigenous religion, have held the area of Mt. Kailash sacred for thousand of years. Today, pilgrims still carry out devotional trips around Mt. Kailash.

MAIN ATTRACTION

Mt. Kailash

In Tibetan, the mountain’s name is Kangrinboqe, meaning “precious snow jewel”. Each year, countless pilgrims from India, Nepal and Bhutan as well as those around Tibetan areas come here to pay homage to the mountain.

On the south face of the mountain, there is a vertical cleft and a horizontal rock shelf that forms a Buddhist swastika symbol, which is holy to Buddhists.

Many Tibetan Buddhist pilgrims treasure their trips to the mountain as one of the holiest acts in their lives. The strenuous and difficult hike (known as a kora) takes around three days and requires travellers to take their own supplies, including food, bedding, stove, fuel, and clothing. The kora starts in Darchen and stops at two monasteries, the Drirapuk and the Zutrulpuk.



JINSHAJIANG RIVER

The origin of Jinshajiang River is Mt. Geladandong in the Qinghai-Tibetan Plateau. The river then flows through Tibet to Yunnan Province, and it reaches the tourist's hot spot Lijiang before taking a U-turn. Rafting at Jinshajiang River starts from the Tiger Leaping Gorge near Lijiang to the Jin'an Bridge, extending for 230 km. This is Class V river rafting and it requires good rafting skill.

MAIN ATTRACTIONS

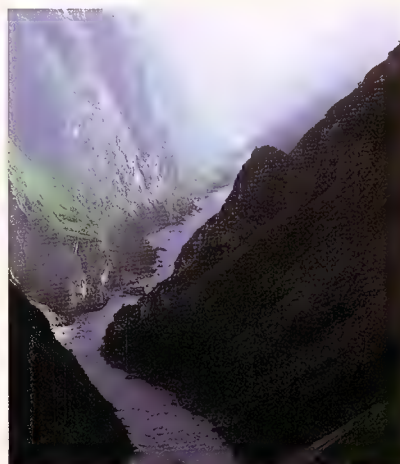
The Ancient Town of Lijiang

Lijiang, situated at the upper reaches of the Jinshajiang River, is largely a Naxi settlement first built during the Song Dynasty (960-1279). The old town area is crisscrossed by a labyrinth of flagged streets and alleyways. Although tourism has taken over the town, the effects are

not detrimental and the wealth of historical treasures here is incredibly rich. Visitors should not miss the daily Naxi ancient music show.

Tiger Leaping Gorge

The 17-km-long gorge tucks neatly between the Yulong Snow Mountain and Haba Snow Mountain, and it is divided into three segments. It has an aggregate fall of 210 m, and most visitors take in the most famous first segment of the gorge to observe the narrowest part of the Jinshajiang River.



HECHI COUNTY

Located in the southern border of the Guangxi Zhuang Autonomous Region, Hechi sits between the southern foot of Yunnan-Guizhou Highland and the Central Guangxi Basin. Gorges and karst caves in Hechi attract cavern explorers from home and abroad.

MAIN ATTRACTIONS

Guilin

The beauty of the Lijiang River and the karst peaks towering into the sky have attracted travellers to Guilin for centuries. In recent decades, although development and exploding tourism are changing the face of this beautiful city, Guilin has remained one of China's greenest and most scenic cities.

Yangshuo

Settled amongst the most beautiful part of the Lijiang River's karst scenery, Yangshuo has become a backpacker's legend. The relaxed pace of life, good food (including some great western cuisine), friendly people, scenic beauty, landscape of paddy fields and streams perfect for cycling, make Yangshuo a paradise for all holiday makers. Those who wish to get a rest from the harsher aspects of life in China should not miss it.

MOTUO COUNTY

Motuo is the only county in China that cannot be accessed by car. Visitors can only get there by a three-day hike, overcoming sliding slopes, leeches and dense forests. Motou is close to the famous Yarlung Zangbo River Grand Canyon,

which is the deepest, longest, highest and most dangerous canyon in the world.

MAIN ATTRACTION

Yarlung Zangbo Grand Canyon

The Yarlung Zangbo River, the world highest river, makes an omega-turn round the highest peak of the east Tibet, forming this largest canyon of the world. The Yarlung Zangbo Grand Canyon stretches about 500-km long and averages over 5,000 m deep. The abundant rainfall, the geomorphology of high mountains and the deep gorges resulted in lots of glaciers, snow-slides and waterfalls, creating a stunning and fanciful natural sights.

The diversified climatic zones in the area give rise to 5,000 species of vegetation in the Yarlung Zangbo Grand Canyon, winning it the reputation of "Plant Gene Bank" and "Xishuangbanna in Tibet". However, the canyon cannot be reached by car and it is still a challenge for explorers.



MEILI SNOW MOUNTAIN

height of 6740 m, has not yet been conquered by man. At its foot lies a modern monsoon maritime glacier, which is of particular interest to geological researchers.

Situated in the east of the Tibetan Plateau, Mount Meili Snow Mountain has long been regarded as the "Holy Mountain" by Tibetan Buddhists. Its summit, Kagbo, which rises to the

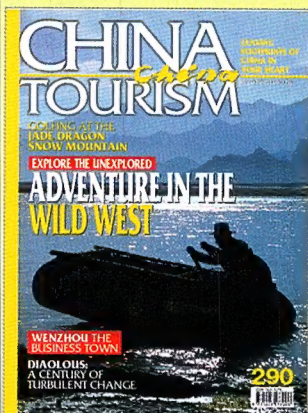
MAIN ATTRACTION



Shangri-La

It was the British writer James Hilton's novel, *The Lost Horizon*, published some 50 years ago, that brought fame to an unknown and uncontaminated place called Shangri-La. A few decades later, the government of Yunnan Province declared the long lost horizon was recovered in Diqing City, and renamed it as Shangri-La.

In the Tibetan language, Shangri-La means a place of good fortune and luck. Located about 10 km east of the Mount Meili, Shangri-La is a natural paradise with stunning scenery. The grassland is divided magically into eight pieces like eight petals of a lotus flower by crisscross rivers and has provided a wonderful habitat for both animals and human beings.



Readership Survey

China Tourism always appreciates feedback from its readers. In accordance with your suggestions, we have recently added a variety of new columns. Still, we need to know more of your opinions, including criticisms and suggestions. Please take a couple of minutes to complete this questionnaire and return it to us. Thank you!

Please give your evaluation of the stories in this issue and your overall impression of *China Tourism*.

	Excellent	Good	Average	Fair	Poor
Adventure in the Wild West	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Diaoious: A Century of Turbulent Change	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Wenzhou the Business Town	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Golfing at the Jade Dragon Snow Mountain	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
A Walking Tour of Macao's Cultural Heritage	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Others:	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

	Excellent	Good	Average	Fair	Poor
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Cover	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Articles	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
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Are you happy with the factual content of *China Tourism*? ☐ Yes ☐ No

What are your suggestions for improvement?

Thank you for taking the time to fill in this questionnaire. It provides us with invaluable feedback which will help us improve *China Tourism* magazine for you.

*Please mail this questionnaire to our office at 24/F, Westlands Centre, 20 Westlands Road, Quarry Bay, Hong Kong, or fax to (852) 2561 8196.

HIGHLIGHTS OF ISSUE No. 291

Feature Story:
Gaoligong Mountains — Scars of the Japan's Invasion

You will never image a tougher battlefield in the world such as the Gaoligong Mountains of the western Yunnan Province unless you see it with your own eyes.

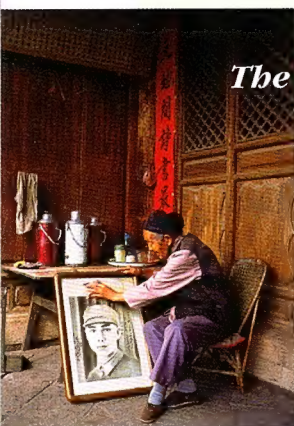
In May of 1944, hundreds of thousand of the soldiers from the Chinese expeditionary army climbed over the imposing Gaoligong Mountains and drove the invading Japanese troops out of China. They then joined forces with the troops that were launching counterattacks from the northern Myanmar. This was the first victory of the counterattack in Chinese modern history, and it marked a historical moment. Consequently, the triumph led to the reopening of the Joseph Warren Stilwell highway, which greatly helped transport army supplies.

The route of this battle has been reserved after the war. Sixty years later, one can still see the shell pits, tunnels, trenches, and fire positions of artillery. Here, I started my most unusual journey.

***The Homeland of Border Guards***

At the foot of the multiple ranges of Mt. Gaoligong, Tengchong is like a frontier town hanging in mid-air.

Situated in western China, Tengchong is the pathway to Southeast Asia. It has been traversed by traders as well as visitors over thousands of years. The town, as such, has become an ancient path and courier station. In the past, people coming to Tengchong hoped to improve their standard of living, but they had to risk dying in the outlandish soil. To get a glimpse into this plight, one has to examine the memorial arches of the Heshun Township, which inscribed people's last words to their beloved. Or, look into the forlornly yet resilient eyes of the widows, they would tell you more stories than you think.

**On the Way:****Horseback Riding to Yunnan-Sichuan Highland**

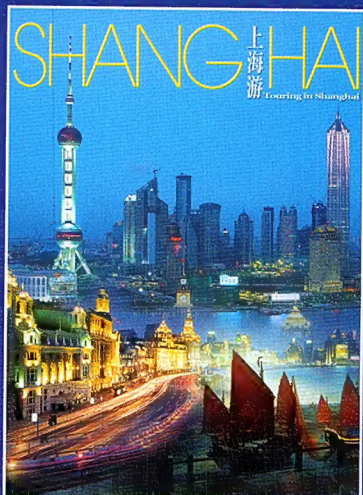
Two years ago, I had a very pleasant trip to Lijiang and Shangri-La in Yunnan Province. And I paid another visit to Yunnan, which started from the north of Shangri-La and crossed the Jinsha River to reach Derong, Xiangcheng and Daocheng in Sichuan Province.

The sweet memory of the journey replayed in my mind over and over again: the wonderland of snow-capped mountains, the icy lakes, the wild forests, the stunning highland landscapes, the honest smiles of the Tibetans, the bumpy highways linking Yunnan, Sichuan and Tibet, and even the frightening altitude sickness.

**City Snap:**
Harbin City —
A Century of
Russian Influence

The Sino-Japan War of 1894-95 and the construction of the "China Eastern Railway" turned the small fishing village of Harbin into a metropolis. About a century ago, Russian nobles, men of wealth and position as well as families of the deposed Tsar came to Harbin at each other's heels. Their coming and going has completely transformed the city indefinitely....

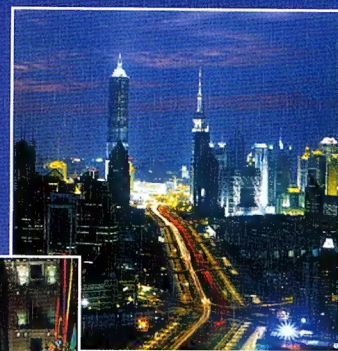
BEST SELLER



Shanghai

has evolved at an unprecedented speed for decades into the biggest commercial city in China and one of the great metropolises of the world. Favourably located at the mouth of the Yangtse River, Shanghai has a long history and a rich culture. Commercial tower blocks and traditional buildings exude their individual charms simultaneously in the Pudong District, where hundreds of buildings in different styles, old or new, are collectively known as the Exposition of World Architecture. A kaleidoscope of entertainments and festivals of Old Shanghai attracts scores of entrepreneurs and travellers alike. "Touring in Shanghai" takes you deeper into this vibrant city

through spectacular photography, along with outlines for more than 10 different kinds of tours including a shopping tour, popular tourist sights, cultural excursions, and more. Practical information summarises accommodations, transport and dining options, and tourist maps are also included. "Touring in Shanghai" is the latest, most comprehensive travel pictorial of Shanghai available in Hong Kong.



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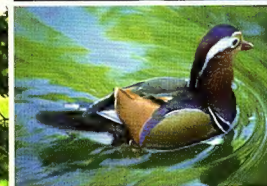
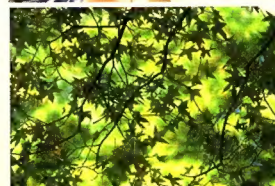
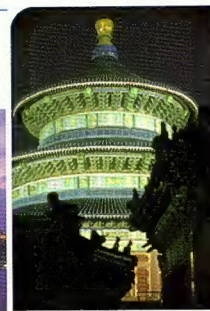
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